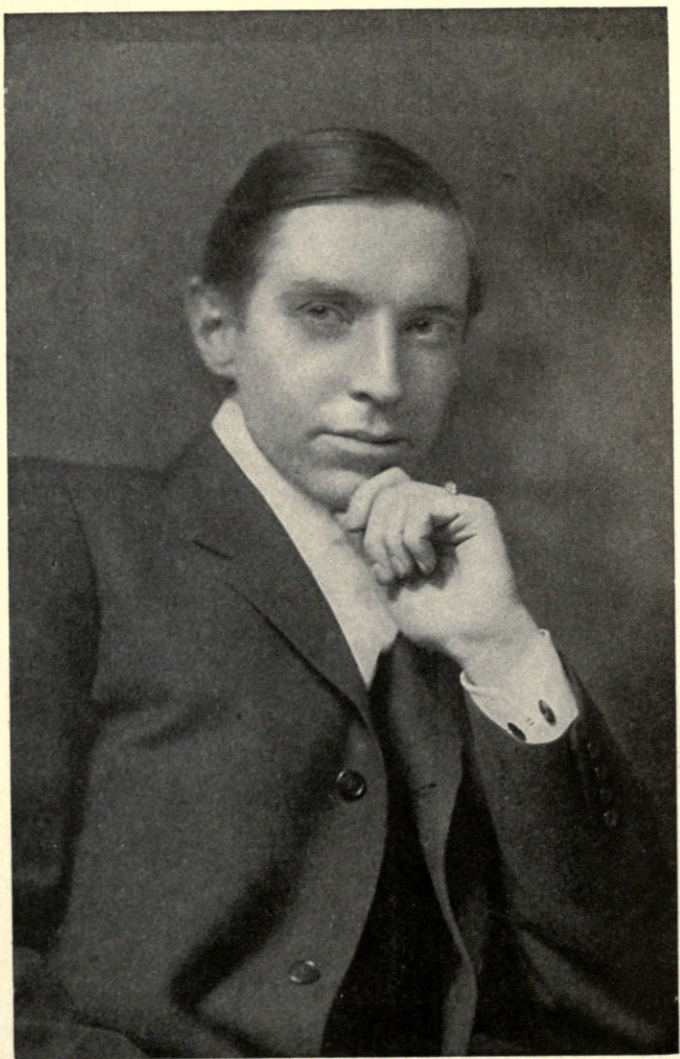


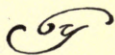
THE GUEST OF HONOR

WILLIAM HODGE



Wm Hoag

The Guest of Honor



WILLIAM HODGE

1911

Chapple Publishing Company, Ltd.

BOSTON

Entered at Stationers' Hall, London

All Rights Reserved

COPYRIGHT

Chapple Publishing Company, Ltd.

1911

DEDICATED

To My Wife
and My Mother

2136035

THE GUEST OF HONOR

CHAPTER I

A FADED carpet, worn through in many places, covered the floor of a little room at the top of a tenement house on Twenty-ninth Street, near Third Avenue, in New York City. The walls were decorated with cheap faded paper—unframed sketches and drawings such as one artist would give to another.

The old book-case with its double glass doors, covered with faded clean curtains, showed by its cracks and scratches that it had been moved about carelessly for many years. The color of the chintz used to make a cozy corner harmonized with the curtains that hung at the tiny window. The plastered ceiling which slanted on each side and both ends—the banister in the center of the room that surrounded the rickety stairs—the broken bed-couch and a few wooden chairs seemed to

possess an air of dignity that gave a pleasant quaintness to the scene. A tot between four and five years of age sat on the floor playing with his blocks in a ray of sunlight. The clumsy patches on his blue and white gingham dress, and the little knees sticking out through the black cotton stockings suggested a boy who might see better days. He jerked his curly head into the air and listened when he heard the sound of feet on the creaking stairs, and greeted Mrs. Murray with a polite good morning as she appeared with one hand on her stomach gasping for breath while she leaned against the banister. "Hello—Jackie—phat-air-ye-doin'?" she grunted between the heavy puffs.

"I'm building a hospital," and he leaned back while he surveyed the toy building carefully. A feeble smile crept over her thin face. She puffed her way to the old bed-couch and dropped on it with a sigh of relief, gave her black straw bonnet a push with both hands and after a few long breaths grunted, "An' phat air ye buildin' a hoshpital fer?"

"My jumping-jack has broken his leg."

"Moy, but that's dridful! Where's ye ye're father?"

"He has gone to get some groceries."

"Ain't ye had anny breakfast yit?"

"Yes, I've had my breakfast and two eggs," he shouted as he reached for another block.

"Ain't ye're father workin' yit?"

"Yes, he's writing all the time."

"Well, if he don't do somethin' besoides wroite, ye'll not ate eggs long at the proice ye have to pay fer'm now."

The stairs creaked as Jack was reaching for another block—he drew his hand back and listened—they creaked again—his big blue eyes opened wider, and wider, and wider at each sound. Mrs. Murray stared over the banister and gave her black skirt a pull at the knees that brought the bottom down closer to the tops of her congress shoes. She folded one hand and held it in the other—placed them both in her lap and sat erect on the edge of the couch.

A heavy, pleasing voice called, "John."

The tapping of a cane was heard on the stairs, a wrinkled hand clutched the banister.

The end of a cane appeared and tapped first one spot then another.

Jack knew the sound—he did not turn, but reached for another block and yelled, “Good-morning, Mr. Warner.”

Warner rested the weight of his heavy body on his cane a few seconds, then used it to feel his way to a chair and said “Good-morning, Jack.” He removed his black slouch hat, hung it on the handle of his cane, ran his fingers through his snow-white hair and heaved a sigh that almost shook the little room.

Mrs. Murray’s eyes wandered from his clean shaven face to the black shiny vest that buttoned tightly around his fleshy figure, then to the ragged edges of his trousers that hung over a shabby pair of laced shoes and a look of sympathy came over her face as she looked at the old man run his fingers between his neck and the celluloid collar that was buttoned with a bone button to a figured soft shirt. “Where is your father?”

Jack informed him with a great deal of pleasure that his father had gone to the grocery store and that Mrs. Murray was present.

Warner greeted her with a "good-morning."

"Good-morning," replied Mrs. Murray, and her voice seemed a trifle softer and she relaxed into an attitude of unconscious sympathy as she listened to the pleasing tone of the man who was good-natured in spite of the fact that he had to feel his way about and look at the world through an old wooden cane.

"You haven't been around these last few weeks, Mrs. Murray."

She resumed her erect attitude on the edge of the couch and replied in a sharp, quick tone, "Oi've bin busy."

Jack sat with his elbows on his knees, his face resting on his hands, studying the difficult problem of building a roof on his toy hospital with blocks.

"Aren't you going to make my bed any more?"

"Not till Oi see e father," was the quick reply.

"And aren't you going to wash my clothes either?"

"Oi can't work fer nothin'."

Jack started for the stairs. He forgot his

hospital and his jumping-jack. He paused as he reached the banister, raised his little head with the dignity of a king and a politeness that made Warner swell with pride:

"If you will excuse me, I'll go down stairs and see if father is coming."

The old stairway didn't creak as his little feet hurried down over its steps, but each step seemed to greet the little toes with a welcome and wished he would stand still and not glide over it so lightly.

An air of loneliness came over the little room and the narrow stream of sunlight on the old rag carpet seemed to flutter and fade. A swallow lit on the sill of the tiny window and chirruped as if calling for an old acquaintance. It hopped to the center of the window, looked in and seemed to chirrup a good-bye, as it flew away and left the two characters sitting there in silence.

"Mrs. Murray, have you gone back on John?" inquired Warner in a friendly voice.

She gave her funny little shawl a pull which brought it tightly around her sallow neck and bent forward to make sure her sharp tone would hit Warner's ear.



*"Informed him that Mr. Weatherbee had not paid her a cent
in over a month"*

"Oi've washed and cl'aned and made bids fer John Weatherbee as long as Oi'm goin' to till he poys me."

"How long have you been doing work for John?"

"Three years."

"And does he owe you much?"

Mrs. Murray hastened herself to the edge of the couch and informed him that Mr. Weatherbee had not paid her a cent in over a month.

"He hasn't had it to pay you."

She pulled herself out a little nearer the edge of the couch. "Oi'm not to bloim fer thot."

"Nor is he."

"Yis, he is to bloime. Sure whin he first come here to live he had to rint the pairler on the very first fluer, an' he spint his money loike a fool."

"He spent it like a thoroughbred, and loaned it like a white man."

"Why don't he go to work?"

"He does work constantly."

"Yis, he wurks, foolin' his toime away wroitin' a lot of trash that no one would waste their toime r'adin'."

"John Weatherbee is an author and a clever one; his novels will be published some day and he will be a rich man. All great authors have been led to fame by the hand of poverty."

"Why, he owes iverybody that's iver had annythin' to do wid 'm."

"But he'll pay them all, every cent he owes them. I am an old newspaper man myself, and I've been associated with authors all my life. I've watched them and I've studied them. I've seen them climb and fall, only to rise and climb higher. John's down now, but he is taking the count with a smile, but watch him—just keep your eye on John Weatherbee."

Mrs. Murray remarked, with much satisfaction as she threw one knee over the other, that until she received what John Weatherbee owed her, she would keep both of her eyes on him.

The slow tread of footsteps on the uncarpeted stairs caused her to look anxiously in that direction. The pounding of heavily soled shoes grew more distinct as they reached the top step. A small boy appeared. He held a package under an arm which had grown many

inches too long for the sleeve of a brown checkered coat. The peak of his hat which covered his large head was pulled well down over his right eye. He placed his elbow on the banister, stood on one foot, threw the other carelessly across it, permitting the latter to rest where it landed, gave a large piece of gum a few vicious gnaws that seemed to tax every muscle in the face that was almost hidden with the marks of soiled fingers and in a voice which resembled that of a young rooster, yelled: "Is Weatherbee in?"

Mrs. Murray smiled as she inquired of the boy what he wanted of Weatherbee.

"I've got his laundry—one shirt and two collars. Fourteen cents," and he emphasized the fourteen cents with all the power his voice possessed.

"Mr. Weatherbee is not in," replied Mr. Warner in a polite tone.

"Well, does any of youse want ter pay fer it?" retorted the boy.

There was a short silence. Mrs. Murray watched Warner nervously tap the floor with the thin, worn sole of his shoe. She tossed her chin in the air and remarked, "Not me!"

The boy centered his gaze on Warner and shouted: "Do you?"

Mrs. Murray watched him as he gripped his cane tightly with both hands.

"I haven't the change."

Mrs. Murray grinned and moved back nearer the center of the couch. A smile of disgust came over the boy's dirty face as he looked from one to the other and remarked in a voice which didn't betray his disgusted smile: "Gee, there ain't fourteen cents in the bunch." He shook his head, turned toward the stairs and started down one step at a time, whistling in a high, shrill tone: "Gee, I wish that I had a girl like the other fellers have."

CHAPTER II

AS the whistling youngster left the last step, and the air of "Gee, I Wish 'That I Had a Girl Like the Other Fellers Have," died away, the old stairway seemed to give a creak as if for good luck and good riddance.

Mrs. Murray strolled to the little window, but there was nothing to see but the rear of the houses on 'Twenty-eighth Street and the fire escapes which were hung with drying garments, so she decided she would rather look in than out. She seated herself and gazed steadily at Warner, who was still sitting in the same chair he had chosen when he entered the room.

She removed a large white handkerchief from her skirt pocket, picked out her choice corner and used it in a manner that caused Warner to raise his head quickly. She moistened her forefingers with her tongue and gave her hair several pats on either side, drawing it down on her temples and back over her ears.

She cleared her throat and looked at Warner out of the corner of her eye:

"Ye're such a fri'nd of Weatherbee's, whoi didn't ye pay the fourteen cints?"

"I said I hadn't the change," was the gentle reply.

She pushed her feet as far forward as her limbs would permit, carefully laid one hand on the other, and grunted: "Fourteen cints is a lot of money if ye ain't got it. I guess the laundry boy knows Weatherbee."

"If the laundry boy knew him, Mrs. Murray, he would have left the laundry."

"And if Weatherbee knew annything and had anny sinse, he'd put that kid in an orphant asylum."

"He adopted the child to prevent it from being sent to an orphan asylum, and when its mother died, he took money that he needed himself to bury her."

He paused and then marked each word with a firm tap on the floor with his cane: "And he'll be rewarded for it."

Mrs. Murray jerked her feet in so quickly that her ankles hit the rung of the chair and

yelled: "A foine home he's given the choild. Sure it's nothin' but a bundle of patches, and half the toime it don't have half enough to ate."

The quick nodding of her head made her bonnet slide down until it rested on the back of her neck. She untied the ribbons, took the bonnet with both hands and brought it down on the top of her head with a vengeance, and tied the ribbons so tightly that it drew the bonnet well down over her right eye. She had more to say and was prepared to say it, but the stairs spoke and she listened.

A puffing sound was heard. The top of a fat, bald head appeared, decorated with closely clipped mouse-colored hair. A red, fat face, with a pug-nose of the same color, was buried between a pair of heavy, sandy side-whiskers that came down to the corners of his mouth. The fat hand clung to the banister and steadied the small, round, puffing figure.

A twinkle of delight came into the small gray eye.

"Good mornin', Mrs. Murray, his Mr. Weatherbee hin?"

"No, Oi'm waitin' fer'm. How much does

he owe you, Mr. Wartle?" And she glanced at Warner to see what effect his reply would have on him.

"'E howes me nearly three months han ha 'alf rent for this room, hand hif 'e don't pay me Saturday, 'e's got to get hout," and the swift nod of the fat head caused the side-whiskers to think the wind was blowing.

Mrs. Murray smiled with satisfaction. "Does 'e howe you hanything, Mr. Warner?"

"No," and his heavy voice filled the little room.

Wartle stepped from the end of the banister as Warner tapped his way there on the floor with his cane. "On the contrary, I owe him. I wish he did owe me. I would consider it an honor to have John Weatherbee in my debt."

The stairs creaked loudly as his heavy weight hit each step and the tapping of his cane was heard guiding him along the hall of the floor below.

Wartle was amazed. He hung his head over the banister and watched him until he was out of sight. He turned to Mrs. Murray and exclaimed with much surprise: "Hi wonder what 'e howes Weatherbee for."

“Fer grub. Sure Weatherbee has fed him and kept him out of the poorhouse fer the last three years.”

Wartle gathered his mouth into an “O” shape and whispered: “Ho! Ho! Hi didn’t know that.” Then a smile broke over his countenance, he tiptoed forward and whispered: “Hi knew Weatherbee wasn’t hat ’ome. Hi came to see you, Mrs. Murray.”

She threw her head back and glanced at him from the corner of her eye. “Don’t flatter now. Ye didn’t cloimb up four flights of stairs to see me.”

“Ho, Hi did. Hi’d climb ha telegraph pole to see you, Mrs. Murray.”

A broad smile crept over her face when she thought of the little fat figure climbing a telegraph pole.

“Sure ye couldn’t get yer hands near a tile-graph pole, ye’re stomich sticks out too far.”

“Hi could hif you was hat the top.”

The smile left her face as she continued in a reproachful tone: “Faith and ye’ll wait a long toime before ye’ll see me at the top of a tile-graph pole.”

Wartle crept a step nearer and he poked his little fat face forward.

"Hand before the world comes to han hend, Hi 'ope to see you 'igher hup than that, Mrs. Murray."

"Away with yer flattery," she replied with a wave of her hand, but the satisfied twinkle in her eye betrayed the words and showed she was enjoying his efforts.

"Hi mean hit," he pleaded, as his fat feet led him a little nearer.

"Sure ye don't mean annythin' ye say," and she pretended to gaze at the ceiling.

"Hi mean hevery thing Hi say to you, Mrs. Murray, hand Hi wish—Hi wish"—his voice seemed to leave him for a second, as he nervously reached for one of his side-whiskers and twirled it around his finger.

"Hi wish you'd consent to be my wife, hand live 'ere with me, hand take care hof my 'ouse."

She took him in from the top of his bald head to the toes of the carpet slippers.

"Faith and if Oi had charge of yer 'ouse (as ye call it), Oi'd clane some of these dead bates out that ye have livin' here."

The remark gave Wartle new courage. He advanced another step.

"Hand that's just what Hi'm goin' to do, hand Hi'm goin' to do hit hat once, too, hif Weatherbee don't pay me Saturday, hout 'e goes."

"Well, if ye take moi advice that's what ye'll do."

"Hi'll take your hadvice, hand Hi'd like to 'ave you take me hand my 'appiness."

He stood with his fat hands stretched out with just the fingers showing from under the long flannel shirt sleeves.

The picture amused Mrs. Murray, though she concealed her smile and grunted somewhat sarcastically and dropping some of her h's in order to imitate him, "Sure and what 'appiness have you? Yer so stingy ye won't hire a cook er a chambermaid, but try to do all the work yersilf."

He pushed the carpet slippers a few inches nearer, with his hands still reaching out as far as he could get them.

"Hif you'd 'ave me, Mrs. Murray, Hi'll 'ire a cook hand ha chambermaid, too."

"Ye can bet ye would. Sure, ye have money to burn an' Oi'd make ye set fire to it. Oi had one husband that was so stingy he wouldn't give annyone his full name."

She watched the little round figure stealing closer to her. His face and head were like a ball of fire.

"Hif you'll 'ave me, Mrs. Murray, Hi'll give you hanything you want."

She moved away a few inches, and in an affected tone, which showed she was having a good time at Wartle's expense, remarked: "Oh, this is so sudden!"

The little gray eyes opened wide. "Sudden, why, Mrs. Murray, Hi've been hasking you to marry me for hover ha year."

"Oi know ye have," and she placed the ends of her long, thin fingers over her mouth, "but ye look so desperate on yer knees."

"Hi'm gettin' desperate."

"Ye're gittin' foolish."

"Hi can't 'elp hit, Mrs. Murray," and he seized her hand and kissed it.

"Stop aitin' me fingers," she yelled. "Are ye losin' yer head entirely?"

"Yes, Mrs. Murray."

"Ye can't fool me. Ye make love to every woman that looks strong enough to do housework. Ye want a housekeeper, ye don't want a woife."

He crawled along and rested his elbow on the couch.

"No, Hi want ha wife, hand hafter we're married, Hi'll give you hanything you want."

"Ye'll give me whativer ye're going to give me before Oi'm married. Oi'll take no chances."

He took her hand, looked up into her eyes and gasped, "Then you'll 'ave me?"

"Oi didn't say Oi would, did Oi?"

"You said has much," and he stepped on her foot with his knee.

"Git off me feet," she screamed. "Sure Oi ain't said half as much as Oi'm goin' to say."

Wartle's knees were beginning to ache and after considerable grunting and puffing, he struggled to his feet and seated himself on the edge of the couch.

"Go hon, Mrs. Murray, Hi love to 'ear you talk. Hi love the little Hirish touch hin your voice."

"Sure I'll give ye an Irish touch that'll do yer heart good," she chuckled as she glanced down at the little fat head that was reaching up toward hers.

"Hanything you'd do hor say would do my 'art good, Mrs. Murray, hand hif you'll consent to be Mrs. Wartle—"

As he said Mrs. Wartle, she threw up both hands and exclaimed: "Wartle! Hivins, what a name. I'd feel as if a toad had bit me."

"What's hin ha name, Mrs. Murray?" and he crawled along until his chin touched her shoulder.

"There's nuthin' but money in your name," and she gave his chin a push with her shoulder that sent his head away several inches, but it traveled back a short distance with each word.

"Hand hif you'll be Mrs. Wartle, Hi'll put hit hall hin your name."

There was a short pause. Her left eye closed as she looked down at him and spoke seriously: "Ye will?"

"Yes," was the quick reply, and his chin touched her shoulder again.

But she didn't brush it away this time. She

brushed a little imaginary dust from the sleeve of her waist, looked away in the opposite direction and spoke in a careless manner.

"Under thim conditions, I might be induced."

"Then you'll 'ave me?"

"Ye say, if Oi'll have ye, ye'll put iverything into moi name?"

"Yes, Mrs. Murray."

"And Oi'm to have charge of the house here and have a cook and a chambermaid?"

"Yes, dear," and he moved up to her side and took her hand in both of his.

She looked steadily at the little, fat, be-whiskered face, and after a few seconds spoke firmly and deliberately: "And the first thing ye do is to have thim lilacs cut off yer cheeks."

A bewildered look came over Wartle's face, he felt with each hand each side-whisker that had been hanging there for nearly thirty years. He gazed longingly at Mrs. Murray, but her thin face was serious. He gave each whisker another pat and exclaimed: "Hi'll cut them hoff myself!"

"Han' when will we be married?"

"Not till ye have everything made out in moi name," she answered quickly.

"Hi'll 'ave the papers made out in the morning. Can Hi see you tonight?" he asked as he crawled up close to her side and put his short fat arm around her thin waist and gazed up into her face.

"Ye can take me to some show."

"Hi'll call for you hat 'alf past seven."

The fat face was on its way to her cheek, but she pulled aside.

"Cut thim lilacs off yer face afore ye come near moi house."

"Hi will," and his hands wandered unconsciously to the whiskers.

"What hopera would you like to see?"

She thought a second, while she fumbled a few sheets of manuscript lying on Weatherbee's table. "Oi'd like to go over to the Third Avenue Theatre and see 'Why Women Sin.'"

Little Jack stood at the bottom of the stairs and yelled: "Mr. Wartle, Mr. Wartle."

Wartle ran to the banister, crying impatiently: "Yes, yes, yes!"

"There's a gentleman at the door who wants to see you!"

He hung his head over the banister and instructed Jack to inform the caller that he would be down at once.

"Perhaps hit's someone looking for ha room. Hi'll see you when you're goin' hout," and he waved his little stubby hand at Mrs. Murray as he started down the stairs.

"Oi'm goin' to wait fer Weatherbee."

Wartle stood at the head of the stairs and tapped the palm of his left hand with the first finger of his right and nodded his head as he uttered each word:

"Hif hit's someone for ha room, hand they'll take hit, Hi'll give 'em this one."

He heard Jack laughing heartily on the stairs of the floor below. Wartle listened. He heard a kind, heavy voice say to the child:

"One more flight after this, and it's better to go up than down."

He recognized the voice and said to Mrs. Murray, in a tone that would suggest the coming of a burglar: "'Ere's Weatherbee now!" and stationed himself at the head of the stairs.

Mrs. Murray walked to the corner of the room and seated herself in the wooden rocker,

crossed her legs, determined to have a reckoning with John Weatherbee, who was slowly approaching the top step of the old stairs, carrying little Jack over his shoulder.

CHAPTER III

AS John Weatherbee's tall, thin figure, clad in a dark blue suit which had done summer and winter service for many seasons and worn threadbare in many places, reached the top step, he stood Jack on his feet and patted each cheek affectionately, saying in a low, cheerful voice: "There you are. Dad is a pretty good old elevator, isn't he?"

He bade Wartle a polite "good-morning," and an amused expression came over his clean-shaven face when he turned and saw Mrs. Murray sitting in the crippled rocker.

"Oh—I—good-morning, Mrs. Murray."

"Good-mornin'," was the quick reply in a cold, hard tone.

There was a short silence. The twinkle crept out of Weatherbee's kind blue eyes, and an expression of sadness stole into his face as he turned to hang the faded derby on a nail in the wall.

"Hi'll be back in ha few minutes, Mr. Weath-

erbee. Hi want to speak to you," and Wartle grunted his way down to the ground floor.

"I wonder what he wants to speak to me about?" he asked playfully.

"It's about his room rint," ejaculated Mrs. Murray.

"Mrs. Murray, he talks about it in his sleep." His long well-formed hands found their way to his trousers pockets. He heaved a deep sigh and tried to hide its cause by remarking: "It's a hard climb up those stairs."

"It takes ivery bit of wind out of me," Mrs. Murray replied, and the serious tone of her voice showed she was not trying to be funny.

But Weatherbee's sense of humor teased him and he saw a chance to carry on a conversation for a few moments that wouldn't injure anyone and might postpone the subject he knew Mrs. Murray was there to talk on. He always found her ready to accept praise, especially about her youth; in fact, she was quite conceited about her strength and often told how she could outdo her twenty-six-year-old daughter "washin'." He looked at her pleasantly and his voice possessed a slight tone of reproach:

"O Mrs. Murray, you have wind enough to climb to the top of the Flat Iron Building."

The remark hit her bump of conceit. She rocked herself slowly in the old wooden chair that squeaked at every move. "Faith, Oi ain't got half the wind Oi used to have," and then she added with a great deal of pride, "but Oi can go some yit."

Weatherbee saw that he was safe from being dunned for money as long as he could keep her mind centered on herself, so he continued: "Why, I always thought you were just full of wind."

"Sure, Oi used to be. Oi used to could be on the go all day and it niver bothered me," and she swung herself in the little chair from one end of its short rockers to the other.

Weatherbee turned to hide his smile and fumbled with some sheets of manuscript on the table.

"It bothers other people though, doesn't it?"

"What does?" and she brought the rocker to a sudden stop.

"Why, their wind."

"Well, other people's wind don't bother me,

unless they gab too much with it. Mr. Weatherbee, Oi'd like some money."

The sheets of paper fell from his fingers. He was called upon to answer the question that was put to him so often each day and he refused to answer them with promises, fearing he would be unable to fulfill them. He tried to face his embarrassment with courage, but he had resorted to it so often that it was growing weak, and though his voice was firm it lacked confidence, but was always hopeful.

"Is that the reason you haven't been around for the past few days, Mrs. Murray?"

"It is," she replied quickly. "Oi've bin makin' up yer room and doin' yer washin' and walkin' five blocks to git here and fer the past month ye ain't showed me the color of a tin cint piece, and Oi'll do it no more 'til ye pay me."

"Mrs. Murray, I can't ask you to do any more until I pay you and I shall pay you just as soon as I possibly can. I am very grateful to you for trusting me as long as you have and I am extremely sorry that I have had to keep you waiting."

"Yer not half as sorry as Oi am," she grunted sarcastically. "If ye'd go to wurk at somethin' instid of foolin' yer toime away wroitin' a lot of trash that no one would waste toime raidin', sure that mess of stuff that was writ in toipewritin' that ye give me to raid would make annyone sick to their stomich. The two love-sick fools chasing each other around the country, an' no humin bein' could raid it fer the jaw-breakin' wurds ye use in it. Oi don't see how ye invint such wurds as is in that thing. Can ye let me have a dollar?"

"Mrs. Murray, if I had a dollar I think I'd forget myself and pawn it!"

She paused a second as she watched him with his hands in his empty pockets gazing at the floor.

"Well, whoy don't ye go to wurk? Ye can wroite and spell and figure. Whoy don't ye git a job on a street car or git into a store as a clerk? There is plinty of things ye could do if ye wasn't so lazy!

"Ye ought to be ashamed of yerself adoptin' a boy and then keepin' him lookin' like a rag-bag."

She walked to the banister and found Wartle's face sticking up over the railing.

"Hare you goin' 'ome?" he whispered.

"Yis, Oi'm wastin' me toime here," she answered as she started down the stairs.

"Don't forgit tonight." He ran his fat fingers up among his side-whiskers and rested his red face on both hands, as he eyed Weatherbee severely.

"Mr. Weatherbee, Hi'd like to know what you hintend to do habout the rent?"

"I intend to pay you, Mr. Wartle."

"When?"

"Just as soon as I can."

"You've been tellin' me that hevery day for hover two months!"

"Not every day, Mr. Wartle."

"Hevery day."

"I thought there was one day that you forgot to ask me."

"No, sir," returned Wartle.

"Perhaps I'm wrong."

"You hare wrong," snapped Wartle, "hand Hi'm sick hand tired working this way for



"Wartle eyed Weatherbee severely with his small gray eyes"

my rent, hand Hi'm not ha goin' to hask you hagain."

"Wartle, do you mean that?"

"Hi do mean hit."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Jack from the other side of the banister, where he was studying an old torn picture book.

"Jack!" Weatherbee called in a mildly reprimanding tone.

"Hi want my rent hor my room Saturday," and he pounded his fist on the railing.

"Mr. Wartle, I'd like to be able to give you both."

"Ho, hif you pay your rent you can stay. but hif you don't pay me Hi must 'ave my room Saturday, hunderstand, Saturday," and he muttered to himself going down the stairs.

Jack peeked at him from around the edge of the banister and made a face that sent his little nose high in the air. "Dad, if we have to move, where shall we go?"

He asked the question that Weatherbee was silently asking himself and couldn't answer, but he had never failed to find a cheerful reply to Jack's many, many questions and

they were growing more numerous and more difficult each day.

"Oh, we'll find a place somewhere," and he supplied his voice with a note of cheerfulness: "Perhaps we'll go camping."

Jack's eyes opened wide and his face broke into a happy smile. "Under a tent?"

"Yes, under a tent, or a tree or something. Won't that be fine?"

Jack yelled as he hung to his father's hand jumping up and down with delight.

Weatherbee drew him close to his side and pressed both cheeks affectionately.

"I tell you we'll have a great time, won't we!"

"And we'll cook under a tree like the Indians?"

"Yes, we'll catch frogs and have frog's legs for breakfast and we'll shoot wild ducks and cook 'em for dinner."

"I wish I had some now."

"You play with your blocks. I've a big surprise in store for you for your lunch."

Jack took his seat on the floor by his toy hospital and studied its construction carefully.



"Jack took his seat on the floor by his toy hospital"

Weatherbee sank into an old wooden chair, and his mind traveled from one end of his situation to the other, without finding any way of improving it.

The sun peeked in through the little window and seemed to dance on Jack's light curls as he held his elbow in one hand and rested his chin in the other.

"Dad, what does God do with the old moon when he sends the new moon out?"

"What's that?"

"I say what does God do with the old moon when he sends the new moon out?"

Weatherbee pretended to clear his throat a few times while he searched for a reply.

"Why—a—why, he just stores it away in the clouds."

"I thought you said the clouds were made of water."

"They are."

"Well, I should think the moons would fall out and down on the earth."

"Well, you see—you see—a—the moon floats—the moon floats like a cork—yes—the moon floats like a cork."

"On this side of the clouds or the other?"

"On the other side, of course, on the other side."

Jack's eyes grew more quizzical and the wrinkles in his little forehead deepened as he pulled his brows together.

"How is it that the new moon floats on this side?" and he drew his little feet close under his limbs and his bare knees stuck straight up in the air.

Weatherbee "ahemed" a few times and finally started to speak, not knowing just what he was going to say.

"Well, I guess the moon doesn't float until it's full and—a—when it is full it becomes—a—so full of cork that it just floats right up to the other side."

"I guess the other side of the clouds must be full of moons, mustn't it?"

"Oh, yes—my, yes—the other side is all covered with moons—it's just full of moons."

"How many moons do you think are up there?"

"Oh, thousands and thousands and thousands," and he peeked over his shoulder to

find Jack still sitting in the same position and his eyes dancing with wonderment.

"Can they talk to each other?"

"Oh, my, yes, yes. They can talk and laugh and sing and dance!"

"Can they really dance?"

"Yes, they dance and kick up and have a lovely time."

"How can they dance and kick up? The moon hasn't any legs!"

"Well—a—you see the moons are round and they roll around like balls and—"

"You said they kicked up!" A disappointed look came over Jack's face as he lifted his head and looked at his father reproachfully.

"Well," continued Weatherbee: "They bound up like rubber balls" and he moved his hands grotesquely to illustrate their bounding. Jack placed his chin back in his hand and inquired more seriously than ever: "What do the stars do?"

"What?"

"What do the stars do when they are not on this side of the clouds?"

Weatherbee rested his elbow on the table, crossed his legs and sighed in despair:

"Don't you want to go down stairs and play with the cat?"

Jack jumped to his feet with a shout and started for the stairs.

"Don't make a noise and don't go out on the street."

"No, I won't," he cried, then stepped aside and bowed politely .

"Good-morning, Mr. Warner." He took the end of Warner's cane and pulled him to the center of the room and ran down the stairs yelling: "I'm going to play with the cat, Mr. Warner."

CHAPTER IV

WHEN Jack's voice died away in the distance, it left two smiling faces in the little room. Weatherbee leaned against the edge of the door that opened into a small closet, and dreamed back over the child's life until he saw him sitting on the floor of the little hall bedroom, playing with a piece of old rubber doll, and he heard him clap his tiny hands as he watched Weatherbee pouring milk into his nursing bottle. He saw his mother's frail figure lying on the bed and heard her pleading to him to care for her babe. He heard the friendless woman praying for her child and wondered if she could see him now with the cat.

Warner knew that Weatherbee's visit with Mrs. Murray had been anything but pleasant and he tugged at his mind for something encouraging to say, as he tapped his way to the crippled rocker with his cane.

"John, you haven't told me about that enter-

tainment you went to, given by that "Ten Club." Who recited your poem?"

"The most beautiful girl I have ever seen. I got dizzy when I saw her and heard her speak—dark hair—tall—slender—and her voice—"

"Why didn't you introduce yourself?" interrupted Warner gruffly.

"Well, I don't mind telling you that I thought of it, but I took a peek at the fringe on these trousers and said to myself, if she sees me coming, she'll give me a nickel and ask me to turn over a new leaf."

"John, any girl who likes poetry loves rags. Whose poem won the prize?"

Weatherbee informed him that his was the favorite poem, and Warner jumped to his feet shouting "Hurrah" in a voice that could have been heard a block away.

"What was the prize, John?"

"I don't know. I haven't received it yet. The club wrote me stating that it would be presented at a luncheon to which they invited me."

Warner swung his cane in the air. "Hurrah for Weatherbee," and his face was quite red with excitement.

"But, Warner, I had to decline the invitation."

"Why?"

"If you could see me, Warner, you wouldn't ask. I look like a December leaf on a chestnut tree."

"Those people won't look at your clothes."

"They won't," replied Weatherbee humorously, "for I won't give them a chance. Why, Warner, I wouldn't have that girl see me—why—she's—she's—I wish I could describe her to you."

"John, I never heard you try so hard to talk about a girl before—you are in love—and I bet my life if she knew you as well as I do, she'd be in love with you!"

"Warner, if that girl spoke to me, I'd fall down!"

"You'd get up again and the fall would do you good," and he rested himself in the little chair and rocked contentedly.

"You never know where love is going to light, John."

"Warner, I'm ashamed of myself for even thinking of that girl."

"Why?"

“Why, a pauper like me, with every stitch of clothes I own hanging in the pawn shop, and I owe money to everyone I know and no chance to pay them.”

“John, you have every chance in the world to pay them. Here you are twenty-five years old and you have written half a dozen books and every one of them is clever, and they’ll be published some day and you’ll be a rich man. Each book is original. You have a style of your own. There is no writer today writing in the vein you are writing in.”

“Maybe that is the reason I can’t get any of them published.”

“Patience, John, patience. I wish my chances were as good as yours—you’re young! You have everything before you! Look at me, an old newspaper reporter out of a job and can’t get one because I’m so blind I can’t see to write a word.

“John, I can’t see anything. I can’t see when the sun is shining, but I can walk and not very good at that, for my old legs are so full of rheumatism and age, they can hardly carry my old body, but I make them. I won’t give up and

I hobble over to Central Park where I can smell the green and feel the breeze from the trees and hear the birds sing. I can't see them, but I can hear them sing, and there is an old robin up there, just inside the Seventy-second Street entrance, that seems to know when I come in and he sings and sings and when the carriages drive by and make a noise, he seems to grow jealous, and he sings louder for fear I can't hear him and when I start to come away he seems to sing good-bye and I can hear him until I get away out into Broadway, and I'm happy, damn it, John, I'm happy. I won't be sad. I'm happy, they can't make me sad, John, they can't make me sad," but his smile would have been moistened if he hadn't sneaked the tears from the corners of his eyes with his bare fingers, and Weatherbee stood in silence while his heart applauded the man who smiled at the world he couldn't even see.

He sauntered over and slapped him on the back, and then gave his ear a slight pull and placed his hand on Warner's head and shook it affectionately.

"Warner, I'm proud of you. I am proud to

know you," and he gave his ear another little affectionate twist.

"You mustn't get discouraged, John."

"Why, Warner, I am not discouraged."

"Don't you bother your head about what you have hanging in the pawn shop. You are going to look back at these days and smile."

"Warner, I smile at them now, bless your heart! When I see a funeral I laugh because I'm not in the hearse," and he seated himself on the table and swung his feet to and fro as he described to Warner the humorous picture he had of himself leaving the small town of his birth and starting out to set New York City afire with his literary efforts.

"Whenever I am in need of a laugh, Warner, I look at myself driving up to this house in a cab, renting the parlor on the ground floor, and as my bank account shrunk, I moved one flight at a time until I have reached here."

"It's easier to go down than up, John."

"I think I was the most conceited pup that ever struck New York!"

"You don't know what conceit is. You gave away more money than you spent. You helped

the sick and you fed the hungry. You have worked earnestly and you will be rewarded and you should be proud of your poverty."

"Oh, I don't mind poverty, Warner. Honest poverty has stolen wealth sitting up nights taking sleeping tablets and if I don't do some hustling, I'll be sitting up nights myself," he remarked with a dry smile, and picked up a small photograph in a wooden frame that was standing on the table.

"That girl who recited my poem is the image of Jack's mother," Warner smiled as he swung himself gently in the little rocker that squeaked at every move, but its squeak was soon buried by the sound of Jack's voice.

"Rub-dub-dub. Rub-dub-dub. Rubidy—dubidy—dub-dub-dub. Rub-dub-dub. Rub-dub-dub. Rubidy—dubidy—dub-dub-dub." He pounded his little feet on each step of the old stairs until he reached the top and stuck out his chest and yelled: "I'm a soldier," and continued the rub-dub-dub as he marched down to his father's side and saluted.

"What did you do with the cat, Captain?"

Jack saluted again, and held the edge of his

hand to his temple as he replied in a deep tone: "I pulled its tail, General, and it ran down into the basement and out of the back door."

Weatherbee ran his fingers through Jack's curls and shook his little head as he squeezed it tightly between his hands.

"Mr. Warner, we are going camping."

"When?"

"When are we going, Dad?"

"I think we are liable to go about Saturday."

"An' we'll take Mr. Warner, won't we?"

"If you don't take me, I won't take you over to Mrs. Turner's for any more of her nice jelly cake."

"We wouldn't go any place unless we took Mr. Warner, would we, Dad?"

"You bet we wouldn't," and he gave his head another little affectionate shake. "You run down stairs and ask Mr. Wartle what time it is," and he was almost to the next floor before Weatherbee had time to get to the banister and warn him not to call him "Wartie" and he yelled back a promising "no" from the second floor below.

"Does he know you are going to send him over to Mrs. Turner's for lunch, John?"

"No, I haven't told him yet. I've kept it as a surprise for him. Warner," he continued as he folded his arms and leaned against the banister, "you have been holding out on me for the past two days."

"What do you mean?"

"Have you grown tired of my cooking?"

"How can you ask that after the way I ate here the other night?"

"Where have you been eating since, then?"

"At Mrs. Turner's."

There was a note of doubt in Weatherbee's voice as he walked down to Warner and remarked slowly: "You haven't been over to Mrs. Turner's for your meals for two days in succession! You have been staying away because you thought I didn't have enough to go around."

He placed his hands on the back of the rocker and leaned down over Warner and after a short pause whispered in a voice of determination that startled Warner, for he had never heard the note in Weatherbee's voice before!

"Warner, before I'll see Jack hungry, I'll steal, and when it comes to that, I'll steal

enough for the three of us, so you come here and eat until I cry quits."

"It is five minutes to twelve," Jack shouted as he ran up the stairs.

Weatherbee clapped his hands together and exclaimed in a jovial tone: "By jove, I almost forgot something. Come here till I wash your hands and face," and he picked him up and stood him on the table and ran to the closet and got a sponge and rubbed his little hands and face quickly.

"What is the matter, Dad?" and his big eyes were wide open with surprise.

"Why, Dad almost forgot that he has to go out on business, and Mr. Warner is going to take you over to Mrs. Turner's for luncheon, what do you think of that?"

"Oh, that is dandy," and his words were interrupted by the sponge.

"Dad has got to go out on business, understand, regular business."

Jack shut his eyes and held his face up as Weatherbee bounced the sponge against his mouth when he tried to talk and after a hard struggle finally asked: "What business?"

"Oh, regular business," Weatherbee answered, and ran for the towel and covered Jack's face when he tried to talk through it.

"A boo—o—ok?"

"Yes, that's it—a book. Where is your hat—quick!"

"Dad's in a hurry, an awful hurry." Jack ran and got his little faded straw hat and Weatherbee tied the blue streamers under his chin and gave him a kiss that made the child gasp for breath.

"There you are!" He put his little hand in Warner's, who was waiting at the banisters.

"Good-bye, and give my love to Mrs. Turner," he yelled, as Jack led Warner down the stairs.

"We will. I hope they print your book, Dad," he shouted, pulling Warner around the corner of the hall below.

CHAPTER V

"DO you wish to stop here?" inquired the chauffeur in a doubtful tone, as he brought the large touring car to a stop and looked with much disgust at the dirty windows which Wartle had not washed for months.

"Have you driven to the address I gave you?" Miss Kent asked gently.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then we would like to get out, please." And the chauffeur opened the door of the car quickly.

Wartle's face became a study of wonderment as he peeked from the basement window and saw the two beautifully gowned young ladies assisted from the automobile by a smartly dressed young man, whose hands were covered with bright chamois gloves, a necktie of the same color and a walking stick almost as large as himself.

"What can they want 'ere?" Wartle muttered to himself, as he ran up the stairs and opened the door.

"Does Mr. Weatherbee live here?"

And the music of Miss Kent's voice startled Wartle, bowing profusely as he went down the hall, exclaiming: "Yes, ma'am, right this way, Hi'll show you," until his heels struck the lower step of the stairs and he sat down with a thud.

Neither Thisby nor Helen Kent made any effort to subdue their laughter, while they watched Rosamond assist Wartle to his feet, as he mumbled: "Hexcuse me, Hi thank you. Right this way," and started up the stairs.

Rosamond found it difficult to conceal her smile as she shook her finger at Thisby and Helen, who were giggling at Wartle puffing and grunting at each step.

"An automobile doesn't make so much noise, after all," Thisby remarked.

"Hi think they're hawful things," retorted Wartle. "Hi'm hafraid hof my life hof 'em!"

"Have you ever ridden in one?" inquired Helen, whose voice showed that she was not accustomed to climbing stairs.

"No, ma'am. Hi likes 'orses, but Hi 'ates hautomobiles."

Helen giggled as she replied: "But 'orses run away."

"Ho, Hi don't like them kind. Hi likes the kind they 'ave hon the cabs."

"Do you like donkeys?" inquired Thisby.

"Hi likes to look hat them, but they're hawful kickers."

And Rosamond shook her hands at Thisby, who was trying to smother his laughter with his chamois gloves.

"Right hat the top hof these stairs his Mr. Weatherbee's room," and he bowed low as Miss Rosamond thanked him politely and proceeded up the stairs.

"In all my life I have never been so high up."

"You may never be again, Thisby," returned Rosamond gently.

Weatherbee had been cheerfully doing the work about the room. He had swept and put everything in order as best he could and was sitting at the wooden table he used for a writing desk, with his head resting on his hand and wondering if Warner was right in his opinion about his books. He repeated to himself the words Warner had so often spoken: "Your books will be published some day and you'll

be a rich man." He tried to make himself believe that Warner was right, but he was afraid his opinion was controlled by friendship and as he sat there wondering and dreaming, the sound of Miss Kent's voice fell upon his ears, as gently and softly as some wonderful strain of music he had once dreamed of, and he thought he was still dreaming, and he was not surprised, for he had thought of her constantly since the first time he saw her and heard her voice and he closed his eyes and he smiled and raised his head slowly and imagined he saw her standing on the stage reciting his poem: "As the Sun Said Good-bye to the Moon."

When she reached the top step she rested her hand on the quaint little banister and took in the room with a glance; the atmosphere of artistic poverty it possessed fascinated her. She felt as if the room belonged to the poem and the poem belonged to the room and both were a part of the author.

"Does Mr. Weatherbee live here?" she asked softly.

Weatherbee raised his head quickly, then jumped to his feet, and gasped, "I beg your pardon!"

"Does Mr. Weatherbee live here?" she repeated.

"No," he mumbled in a quivering voice, as he pulled his cuff down below the edge of his coat sleeve. "This is Mr. Weatherbee's studio, but—but he doesn't live—here," and he gave the other cuff a sudden jerk and pushed the ends of his streaming tie under his waistcoat.

"Oh, I see," and Miss Kent took a few steps toward the center of the room. "Is he in?"

"No—he—he hasn't been here this morning, yet."

"Do you represent Mr. Weatherbee in any way?"

"Yes, oh, yes," he replied, "I—I am Mr. Weatherbee's secretary," and he bowed politely.

"I am Miss Kent of the 'Young Women's Ten Club' and have called to thank Mr. Weatherbee for the beautiful poem he sent us and tell him what a great success it was."

"That is indeed kind of you—I"—and he corrected himself quickly, "Mr. Weatherbee heard you recite it."

"Oh, was he there?" Miss Kent inquired eagerly, as she advanced toward Weatherbee quickly.

"Yes, he and I went together. He was kind enough to take me; in fact he takes me most every place he goes."

"And you say he really liked it?" Helen exclaimed as if she thought such a thing were really impossible.

Weatherbee bowed his head slightly, and placed his hands behind his back.

"I never knew Mr. Weatherbee to enthuse over anything as he has over your delivery of his poem. He talks to me every morning about it."

Miss Kent clasped her hands together and she looked from Helen to Thisby, then exclaimed with much enthusiasm, "How charming!"

Weatherbee smiled and bowed gracefully. "Yes, indeed, he doesn't talk of anything else. He breaks out every once in a while in a most enthusiastic manner and says: 'Jack,' 'Tom—Tom—his name is Jack and my name is Tom—he always calls me Tom, yes, he'll say, 'Tom,

what a beautiful voice Miss Kent has,' and I agree with him; we always agree."

"You should have heard some of the compliments the ladies paid him as an author," interrupted Helen.

"I'm sure it would please him," and he bowed again.

"Especially Miss Kent," she continued, then looked at Rosamond and laughed.

"That's jolly well true," put in Thisby, who was bored with the conversation.

"I don't think it possible for Miss Kent to admire the poem as much as the author admired the way she delivered it."

"We admire the author who can write such beautiful things."

And Helen laughed while she threw a quizzical glance at Rosamond and exclaimed, "We!"

Thisby fanned himself with his hat, and gazed from one to the other. "A mutual admiration society. As for myself, I don't care a rap for poetry!"

"Why, 'Thisby!'" and there was a note of reproach in Rosamond's voice.

"I jolly well don't."

"Well, I wouldn't boast about it," she replied, then turned to Weatherbee. "When do you expect Mr. Weatherbee in?"

"I really couldn't say. He might come in any minute and he might not be here today at all."

"This is just our luck! We are very anxious to see him. The Club is having a luncheon at my home tomorrow. We wrote and asked Mr. Weatherbee to come, but he declined, so we were appointed as a committee to call and see if we couldn't persuade him to come. We always present the prize to the authors at the luncheon which we give in their honor."

"Is he out of town?" Thisby asked in a snappy tone.

"No—no," returned Weatherbee quietly. "I think he is in the city; in fact I am sure he is. He told me last evening he was going to remain in town all day today."

Helen suggested that he might be home and Weatherbee nodded his head, replying in a tone of forced surprise: "Perhaps he is!"

Thisby thought he had solved the problem and raised his voice with admiration at his own thought. "Why not 'phone him?"

Weatherbee leaned forward quickly, pretending the words had escaped his ears. "I beg your pardon?"

"I say, why not 'phone him?" he yelled, and Weatherbee smiled, then glanced about the room and raised his voice as if he were addressing a deaf person.

"Oh, yes, but we have no 'phone. He did have one, but he had it taken out because it proved an annoyance when he was writing. I'm sorry we haven't a 'phone, very sorry indeed."

"That is simple enough," remarked Helen, turning to Thisby. "You go out to a drug store and call him up."

"Yes, if you give me his number, I'll go out to a drug store and call him up."

Weatherbee's hesitation made it very apparent that he was in an embarrassing position.

"I'm extremely sorry—but—I am not at liberty to give his 'phone number."

"Is he such a crank?" snapped Thisby.

"No, really, Mr. Weatherbee is the most charming man I have ever met."

Rosamond interrupted as if she were de-

fending an old friend: "I suppose he has to protect himself from newspaper reporters and publishers?"

Weatherbee smiled grimly, and whispered: "Especially the publishers," then forced a faint cough as he continued: "All the publishers chase after him. It's really laughable sometimes to see them fight among themselves to get his stories and books and things." He watched Rosamond glancing about the room.

"Are any of his books here?"

"No, there isn't; in fact there is hardly anything left here at all now. He usually sends his valuable things home, before he goes away for the summer."

"Oh, is he preparing to go away?"

"I think he is."

"When does he leave?"

Weatherbee smiled, and replied with a great deal of assurance: "From what I heard him and the proprietor of the house say this morning, I think he'll leave about Saturday."

"It is rather early."

"It is a little earlier than he expected to go, I think."

"Where does he go?" asked Thisby bluntly.

"I think he'll go camping this summer."

Helen glanced at Rosamond, then turned and winked at Thisby.

"Is Mr. Weatherbee a young man?"

"Mr. Weatherbee and I are about the same age."

"Now, Rosamond, you ask if he is tall," and Rosamond obeyed with a fascinating smile that became still more fascinating when Weatherbee informed her that he was about six feet.

"Light or dark?" she asked eagerly.

"Rather light—quite light." Helen laughed heartily and seated herself in the rocker.

"That settles it. Now we will wait until he comes," and she laughed still harder when Rosamond replied: "Oh, hush," and turned to Weatherbee quickly. "Does he do all his writing here?"

"Most of it."

"What a quaint spot! What a dear old library!" Weatherbee followed her to the old bookcase and spoke in a voice that trembled with admiration: "He is very fond of antiques."

"May I open it?" and she stepped back with surprise as he threw the doors open.

"Oh, he has taken all his books away!"

"All but this set of Dickens, and he left those until the last. I think he'll have me take these away this afternoon or in the morning."

"Well, I am not going to wait any longer, Rosamond; I'll have the chauffeur drive me home and come back and get you and Thisby."

"No—no, I'm going with you. If I write Mr. Weatherbee a note, will you see that he gets it today?"

He arranged the pen, ink and paper, and assured her in promising tones that he would deliver the note to Mr. Weatherbee without fail.

"That is a very good portrait of you," Helen remarked while gazing at a small painting of Weatherbee hanging on the wall.

"Do you like it?"

"Very much."

"One of Mr. Weatherbee's friends painted that and gave it to me."

Thisby didn't hesitate to say that the nose was too long, but Helen disagreed with him

and inquired if there was a picture of Mr. Weatherbee in the room and Weatherbee tried to save another lie by looking in the opposite direction, remarking quietly: "I don't see any now."

"Do you write at all?"

"A little, I've been studying for some time with Mr. Weatherbee."

"Are you going to be a poet?"

"I would like to be."

Thisby looked at Helen with a little reproach, and remarked in a firm tone that he would jolly well like to write a poem that would drive all the ladies daft, and he laughed good-naturedly when she replied quickly that she hadn't any doubt that a poem written by him would drive anyone daft.

"What on earth are you doing, Rosamond, writing a book?"

As Rosamond reached for an envelope, her elbow hit the picture of Jack's mother and it fell to the floor.

"You'll be sure and give Mr. Weatherbee this note today, won't you?"

"Positively," he replied, taking the note and turning to conceal his smile.



"Rosamond looked at it quickly and gasped, 'Marguerette'"

"I'm ready," exclaimed Rosamond as she turned to Helen, who was holding the picture in both hands. Her face was pale and she staggered forward and gave the picture to Rosamond, who looked at it quickly and gasped: "Marguerette!" She tried to control her frightened condition, and turned to see if either of the men were watching them.

Thisby was resting on his cane gazing at Weatherbee's painting and Weatherbee stood studying the strong, characteristic handwriting on the envelope addressed to himself.

"Pardon me, but may I ask who this is?" Rosamond inquired in a voice that did not conceal her excitement.

Weatherbee gazed at the picture a second and replied tenderly: "A friend of Mr. Weatherbee's."

Rosamond glared at the picture again, and whispered: "I wish he were here." She wanted to make further inquiries, but decided she would wait and ask Weatherbee himself. She placed the picture on the table and turned toward the stairs to hide her tears.

"Don't forget the letter, will you? Come,

Helen. Thank you very much. I hope we haven't taken too much of your time."

"No, indeed," he replied, and followed her to the banister trying to catch a glimpse of her face, but she kept her head turned.

"It has been a great pleasure to me. Can you find your way out?"

"Yes, thank you," but he stole after them and opened the front door just wide enough to peek out and see her drive away.

CHAPTER VI

AS Miss Kent's automobile rolled up Twenty-ninth Street, Weatherbee stood on the steps and watched the picture fade into memory. He unfolded her letter that he had nervously squeezed into a small ball and sat on the stone steps and read it through many times.

The stone steps, which the scorching sun had made hot enough to fry an egg on, seemed like cushioned chairs to him. He forgot he was sitting—he forgot everything but the dream he had dreamed so many times—he finished the letter again, then raised his head and wondered if he were still dreaming.

He thought a few seconds and started to read the letter again and would have read it many, many times had not the tapping of Warner's cane on the stone walk interrupted him. His good judgment told him he was not quite in his right mind and he tried hard to pull himself together and greet Warner in a natural tone of voice.

"Hello, Warner, where is Jack?" he remarked carelessly.

"Mrs. Turner wouldn't let me bring him away. She insisted on him staying until three o'clock anyway, and I left the little rascal there eating his head off."

"Warner, who do you suppose called on me while you were away?"

"Who?"

"You couldn't guess in twenty years."

"The publisher!" exclaimed Warner, and his voice trembled with excitement.

"Guess again."

"Who?"

"No, you're still wrong."

"Who was it, John?" And when Weatherbee informed him that it was Miss Kent, he stood as if he expected Warner to fall, but he only grunted, "Who the devil is Miss Kent?"

"Why, the beautiful girl I told you of who recited my poem."

"Ah-ha!" responded Warner in a low tone. "In love with the author."

"No, no, just called to—"

"Oh, rot," interrupted Warner, striking the walk with his cane. "What did she want?"

"Insisted that I attend this luncheon given by the 'Ten Club' at her home tomorrow—actually insists the club sent her to insist."

"Bully for you, John, bully for you."

"Sit down, Warner, and I'll tell you all about it."

They were hardly seated before Warner jumped up and inquired if that was the hottest spot in New York they could find to sit on, and on Weatherbee's suggestion, they started arm in arm for Madison Square, and Warner shook with laughter when Weatherbee told him how he had succeeded in passing himself off as his own secretary.

"John, that is a good joke on her, and I'll bet the society will enjoy it when you tell them."

"When I tell them?" and he gave Warner a searching glance, for he really thought he was jesting.

"You don't think I am going, do you, Warner?"

"Certainly you're going," he growled.

"Warner, would you really have me go to that girl's house looking as I do?"

"By all means. Do you suppose she thinks

your poems were written by a fine suit of clothes? No, for a girl who would look for a swell suit of clothes wouldn't have a mind broad enough to appreciate such a poem."

Weatherbee listened attentively to Warner's remark and sauntered along in silence, buried in deep thought.

"Our bench is vacant, Warner," he said in a low tone, as he led him to the seat they always sat on unless it was occupied by others who sought Madison Square Park for outdoor recreation.

Both sat for several minutes in silence and Warner knew there was something out of the ordinary on Weatherbee's mind. He was sure it was one of two things. Either room rent or Miss Kent, but owing to the fact that Weatherbee had never given any thought to ladies, he was somewhat puzzled as to which it was, but he was silently betting on Miss Kent.

"There's a little breeze here today, Warner."

Warner smiled faintly, for he knew from Weatherbee's tone that he was not thinking of the breeze.

"There's always a breeze here, John, you get

it from the east, west, north and south, with a double cross. This should be called the X of New York."

"That would be a good name for it," Weatherbee replied slowly, when he noticed the suggestion of the X made by Broadway crossing Fifth Avenue.

"You've helped me thresh out a good many ideas for my novels in this Square, Warner."

"I hope I'll be able to help you thresh out a good many more," Warner replied kindly.

"What are you worried about, John?"

"I'm not worried about anything."

"You're doing an awful lot of thinking."

"I guess it's up to me to do a little thinking, isn't it, Warner?"

"Well, John," and Warner dragged his words out in a soft, low tone and put his hand on Weatherbee's knee. "Think, but don't worry—worry is what keeps the undertakers busy. You have done all the thinking and all the figuring and all the guessing there is to be done about your books, and I have guessed and thought and figured with you. I have advised you because I feel that I am capable of advising

and I know you are going to win out. I feel it. I'm sure of it. It's only a matter of time. I can't see, but I can hear and I'll bet both of my ears that I am right. I won't bet on the exact date of the publication of your novels, but someone will recognize their worth and publish them, but you can't hasten the publication by worrying, so why not give time a chance for a few days and see what it will do? Time has done a great deal in the last six hours," and he patted Weatherbee's knee affectionately, leaned closer to him and whispered: "It has opened up an avenue in your character that I had never heard of before!"

"What do you mean?" Weatherbee asked gently.

Warner paused a few seconds, then leaned toward Weatherbee and whispered: "You're in love!"

A long drawn out "What" forced Warner to repeat the words, and he reached for Weatherbee's hand and squeezed it tightly and continued in a voice that trembled with emotion. "It's beautiful, John—it's beautiful. I never loved but once, and I have never been unhappy since."

"Warner, I wouldn't allow myself to think of love."

"We don't have to think of it, John, it thinks for us. You say in one of your stories that 'Love knows no law, it favors no place, it has no home, until it dreams, and wanders, until it meets a soul that it clings to and either sings or sobs its life away.'"

"John, I never heard you give a love chirp until today and I would have given the world to have seen your eyes when you were telling me about this lady. There was a note in your voice that I never heard before."

Weatherbee knitted the fingers of both hands together and gazed steadily at the walk, and Warner only became more amused when Weatherbee earnestly insisted that he had not even thought of love.

"Warner," he went on in a low, sincere tone, "if I started to fall in love in my present position, I'd lose all respect for myself. When Miss Kent walked out on the stage to deliver my poem I was somewhat frightened because she was the living image of the girl I had described in the poem, the girl I dreamed of when I was

writing the poem stood before me. I admired the natural, sincere way she read it and I would have liked to have gone to her and thanked her."

"But instead of that," interrupted Warner, "she came to you."

He drew the end of his cane back and forth on the cement walk a few times and then continued in a kind but somewhat amused tone.

"John, did she state in her invitation how she wished you to dress?"

"Certainly not," Weatherbee replied quickly.

"Then how do you know she wouldn't like to have you come dressed as you are?"

"I don't know."

"Then why don't you go and find out?"

"Because she might feel offended."

"At your appearance?"

"Yes."

"But you are not positive."

"Not absolutely."

"John, in my eyes you are doing this girl an injustice."

"How?"

"Perhaps I can explain it more fully by re-

versing the situation," and Weatherbee placed his hat on the bench and listened attentively.

"Imagine you have read a poem written by a lady whom you have never met—your club or your society invite her to a luncheon. She accepts the invitation—she appears in a dress that isn't in style; it is a little worn—we'll say it is quite shabby. You or any club or society that you would be a member of wouldn't be offended, would you?"

"Certainly not."

"You would be a lot of cads if you took offence at the girl's dress, wouldn't you?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, if this girl, or her club or society invites you to their luncheon and takes offence at your clothes, they're what we would call snobs, aren't they?"

"I think in a general conversation they might be referred to as such," Weatherbee remarked in an unsatisfied tone and reached for his hat, placed it on his head and pulled it well down over his eyes.

"But it is hardly fair," Warner continued slowly and deliberately, "to accuse them of be-

ing snobs without giving them a chance to prove it, is it?"

Weatherbee gave Warner a smiling glance from the corner of his eyes and acknowledged he was right.

"So far so good," Warner went on. "Did Miss Kent impress you as being a girl who would take offence at a man she admired (we'll say from a literary standpoint) that circumstances had dressed in an old suit of clothes?"

"No, she did not."

Warner sat in silence waiting for Weatherbee to continue, but he was gazing at a pale blue cloud that was journeying on its way across the sun, and there were two large brown eyes looking down through the pale blue cloud which caused the sun and the cloud to fade into nothing but a mere background.

After Warner had waited some time, he came to the conclusion that Weatherbee was in one of his listening moods and it was up to him to do the talking.

"John, there is an acquaintance, doubtless a friendship, and perhaps something deeper and sweeter, knocking at your door—and because

you haven't a nice suit of clothes, you refuse to open the door and let it in. The same knock may never come again, John."

The pale blue cloud had crossed over the sun and Weatherbee focussed his vacant stare on the earth's green grassy carpet and the two large brown eyes had also shifted and were gazing up at him through the soft green threads.

"In reversing this situation, John, do I make it clear to you that you are wrong?"

"You haven't yet, Warner," and he smiled faintly at the gentle, fatherly way in which Warner was chastising him.

"If the situation were reversed, Warner, do you think Miss Kent would accept the invitation?"

"I'm sure she would."

"Why are you sure?"

"From what she has already done. You declined their invitation, then she called on you and urged you to accept. Is there anything else she can do? Do you think a girl with a poetic mind who is courageous enough to go to a man and tell him that she admires his

work, is going to take offence or even notice a shabby suit of clothes?"

"I'm sorry I didn't have the pluck to tell her who I was," Weatherbee grunted in a disgusted tone as he removed his hat that he had unconsciously been pulling at until it almost covered his eyebrows.

"You go around and get Jack and I'll go home and start the dinner."

"It isn't dinner time, is it, John?"

"It will be by the time you get there," he said and he peeped up at the sun, which was crawling down over the roofs and seemed to be tucking itself away in the Jersey foliage.

When Jack and Warner entered the little garret room, they found dinner waiting and after Jack had surveyed the table carefully, he placed both hands on his little round stomach and exclaimed with a great deal of discomfort that he couldn't eat any dinner because he was too full of cocoanut cake and lemonade.

"I had three glasses of lemonade and four pieces of cocoanut cake," he groaned, then seated himself in the little rocker.

"Did you only eat four pieces?" Weatherbee inquired with a forced sincerity that made Jack

think he had committed a great wrong and he jumped to his feet and replied in a most apologetic way that he just couldn't eat any more.

"But I brought all I couldn't eat home for you and Mr. Warner."

"And didn't you bring home any lemonade?"

"No, I drank it all," he said in an injured tone as he took his father's hand in both of his.

"We don't like lemonade anyway, do we, Warner?" and he gave one of the child's curls an affectionate pull.

"You cut the cake for Mr. Warner and me."

Jack served the cocoanut cake, and nothing in the Weatherbee household tasted so good that night.

When Warner bade Weatherbee good-night at the head of the stairs, he held his hand firmly and whispered: "John, I'll bet I'm right about that girl, a new suit of clothes might grate on her."

As Jack lay in the old couch bed and watched his father climb in, he reminded him that he had forgotten to blow out the candle.

"You are forgetting everything tonight, Dad—you haven't pulled down the window curtain."

CHAPTER VII

WHILE Weatherbee and Warner were sitting in the Square, figuring out their financial situation, Wartle was trying to plan the easiest and less painful way to remove his little round face from between the two side-whiskers that had been hanging on his cheeks for so many years. He knew it was going to be a painful operation for he was not very handy with his razor and he was quite nervous at the thought of shaving himself anyway and his hand was very unsteady—but to pay fifteen cents to a barber was entirely out of the question; that would be a form of extravagance for which he would never forgive himself, so he placed a small mirror on the window, sat before it and twirled the beloved whiskers around his fingers for many minutes.

“Hit’s hall foolishness,” he mumbled to himself as he ran his fingers through them and pushed them back until they almost covered his ears. But Mrs. Murray’s word was law. She

had ordered them off and off they had to come, and off they came in sections.

He attacked them first with a pair of dull scissors, and then with a razor that hadn't been near a hair for so long that it studded when it saw one.

After he had succeeded in stopping the many nicks and cuts in his face from bleeding, he covered each cut and small scratch with a liberal amount of white sticking plaster and after a long disgusted look at himself in the glass, shook his head and gasped: "Hi looks like 'ell."

His feeble, frightened knock on Mrs. Murray's door wasn't heard until he had repeated it several times.

"Merciful Hivins," she exclaimed as she threw up both hands and stepped back from the door. "Have ye bin into a dog foight?"

Wartle removed the old-fashioned moth-eaten silk hat that had sheltered the missing whiskers for so many years and placed it on the table.

"Ere Hi ham just has you hordered me."

"Faith an' Oi didn't oder ye with yer face all covered with whoite labels, did Oi?"

"Hit's stickin' plaster," he returned meekly.

"Ye look as if ye had been run over by some-thin'—did ye try to commit suwecoid?"

"No, Hi was just hexcited, that's hall. Don't you want to go to the hopera with me?"

"Sure, Oi'll go anny place with ye—no wan'll see me, iverybody'll be lookin' at ye."

"Hi looks hawful, don't Hi?"

"Ye do, ye look as if ye had been through the battle of Bull Run. Go ter the glass there and fix yerself—some of yer labels are comin' off."

"Hi guess the sticking plaster his no good; hit's some ha peddler give me for some breakfast one morning," and he tried hard to make the curling corners stick to his face, but found it impossible.

"Shtop pushin' on ye face, ye'll have it all pushed out of shape. Faith and ye look as if ye had yer face done up in curlin' papers. Have ye the tickets?"

"Yes, Hi got them hin the front row."

"Oi'm glad of that, fer Oi loiks to watch the drummer. Come on or we'll be late."

"'Ave you hever seen the hopera of 'Why Women Sin'?" inquired Wartle as he gazed at the program.

"No, but Oi knows it's good, fer they always have foine operas here at the Third Avenue Theatre. The usher'll be after ye if ye don't take yer lid off."

Wartle removed the silk hat that had furnished amusement for those near enough to see the moth-eaten spots, and placed it under the seat.

"Now, don't talk to me," Mrs. Murray ordered as the curtain arose.

"She's lame, hisn't she?" he whispered after the heroine had been on the stage a few seconds.

"Shut up," Mrs. Murray replied in a voice that was heard by everyone in the theatre.

"She's supposed to be lame—didn't ye hear her say that she was pushed out of the villain's airship?"

"But she's dressed in ha hevening dress."

"She didn't 'ave this dress on when he pushed 'er out. Shut up now."

"Hi can't hunderstand hit," Wartle grunted after the curtain had fallen on the first act.

"It's as plain as the stickin' plaster on yer face. The limpy woman is the villain's wife

and he is troyin' to kill her off so he can marry his young toipwriter—that's what he pushed her out of the airship fer.

"Stop pickin' yer face—it's bleedin'," and she pulled Wartle's hand away from his chin and warned him to keep quiet as the curtain arose on the second act.

"Hif 'e poisons 'is wife," Wartle whispered, "'e can't marry 'is typewriter 'cause 'e'll be 'anged."

"Don't ye see that he's goin' to poison her and blame it on the hero?"

"But 'e didn't put hanything in the glass."

"But he made believe put somethin' in it—there—there—she's goin' to drink it. No—she says she isn't thirsty—thank God! thank God!" and Mrs. Murray heaved a sigh of relief and sat back in her seat as the curtain fell.

"The Divil will kill her yit. "Hain't she got the foine 'ead of 'air? It's just exactly the color hof gold—She's hawfully fat, though, hisn't she?"

"Oi think she's beautiful," Mrs. Murray exclaimed, clasping her hands together in admiration.

"She has two lovely gold teeth roight in the front of her mouth, and doiamonds in her ears an' on ivery finger."

"She's got some hon 'er thumbs too, hand haround 'er neck."

"Yis, and doiamond buckles on her slippers."

"She 'as hawfully big feet."

"Well, she's a strappin' big woman—Oi'll bet she weighs over two hundred pounds. Oi wish Oi had some of the fat that she don't need."

"Hi wouldn't 'ave you has fat has 'er fer hanything hin the world. Hi don't see 'ow 'er 'usband hever pushed 'er hout of the hairship—she his two times has big has 'e his, hand when 'e went to choke 'er 'e 'ad to stand hon 'is tip toes to reach 'er neck. 'E doesn't look ha bit well, 'is voice his so weak. When she said to 'im 'Ho, for God's sake pity me, Dalmore,' Hi couldn't 'ear what 'e said hat hall."

"Sure, an' he is supposed to be nothin' but a wee shrimp—keep quiet now, here she is."

"She his much holder than 'e his, hain't she?"

"He is her second husband—ain't ye listenin' to what they're sayin'?"

"Hit's mean hof 'er to want 'im to discharge the typewriter, hisn't it?"

"No, she knows he is stuck on her."

"But she hain't stuck on 'im; she's hin love with the Doctor—Dick Darow."

"Shut up, he's goin' to give her the poisoned box of bonbons; see! see! she's takin' them, the fool, and she's thankin' him for 'em. The brute, he's goin' away and l'ave her there to ate 'em—she's undoin' the box—hush, here's the toip-writer—the little fool is asking her fer some and she's atin' 'em. Look! look at her eyes! See! see! there she goes, she's fallin' on the buffalo robe. Bless her heart, the big fat one is telephonin' fer the doctor."

"How many more hacts hare there?"

"One—it's dridful excitin', ain't it? I thought I'd scream roight out when the toip-writer et the poisoned bonbon."

"She didn't heat hit, there wasn't hanything hin the box."

"Ye dough-head, this is only a opera. She made believe ate it, didn't she? Wake up!"

"Hi'm so sleepy Hi can't keep my heyes hopen."

"Faith and Oi'll not sleep fer a week after watchin' this."

"The Doctor his hawfully young to be ha doctor, hisn't 'e?"

"Sure and the hero has to be young—Oi think he's foine, he has such nice long, curly hair."

"Hi likes 'im better than Hi do the type-writer—she talks through 'er nose so."

"L'ave that stickin' plaster alone—sure yer face'll niver git well if ye kape pickin' at it."

"'Ow many more hacts did you say there was?"

"One, they're gittin' ready for it now—the loights are goin' out. I'll bet if Oi had that young brat by the neck, he wouldn't whistle up in that gallery ag'in fer awhoile.

"There's the poor little toipwriter in bed—moy, but she's as pale as a sheet—and see the young doctor's over there in the corner examin' the bon-bons wid a spy glass—and God love, the big fat blond is bringin' in the little sick toipwriter clam soup."

"What his that glass rod the Doctor his puttin' hin the typewriter's mouth?"

"It's a thermomitor that tells if her fever is gittin' hot or cold. He sez she has one chance out of a million. He's pale, too, the poor divil.

"Here's the pup that poisoned the bonbons."

"His false mustache his comin' hoff, hisn't hit?"

"I hope it does. Bully fer the fat one—she told him to go, and niver look her in the face ag'in."

"Yes, but 'e says 'e won't go."

"Wait a minute, there's goin' to be a scrap—the doctor is goin' to fire him out—there they go—good! good! hurray! fer the Doctor. Do ye hear that noise? That's the villain fallin' down the stairs."

"Hit sounds like broken glass, doesn't hit?"

"Sure, it's somethin' they use to make a noise loike a man fallin' down stairs.

"The Doctor says the toipwriter is goin' to be her own swate self in a few days—see, he's kissin' her."

"His hit hall hover?"

"Yis and Oi'd loike to come ag'in tomorry noight."

"Hi'll take you 'ome hin ha street car hif

you're too tired to walk," Wartle chirruped as if he thought the generosity of his offer would surprise Mrs. Murray.

"Ye'll take me home in nothin' 'till after I go to Sweeney's 'All Night Lunch' and have somethin' to ate."

Wartle tagged along in silence until he recovered from the shock and then inquired meekly where Sweeney's was.

"Oi'll show ye," Mrs. Murray replied in a firm tone. "It's a foine place—some people say that it's almost as good as any of Childs' places."

"Hi've never been hin one hof Childs' places, har they hexpensive?"

"Not very, Sweeney's a foine man—I know him well—I used to wash fer 'em before the Chinaman moved next door."

"What do you think you'll heat?"

"I don't know 'till I see the bill-o-fare."

"Hi'd like a bottle hof good hold Hinglish hale, but hit's so hexpensive."

After Mrs. Murray had listened to the waiter read over everything there was on the menu several times, she decided she would try an

oyster stew. "An' ye can fetch me a shupper of dark beer—

"What are ye goin' to ate?"

"Hi don't want hanything—Hi never heat hin the middle hof the night."

"Ye want a bottle of ale, don't ye?"

"No, Hi don't think Hi'll drink hit, hit might hupset me."

"Drink it, sure ye can't be any worse than ye are now. Bring a bottle of Dogs Head—it's good for what ales him."

After Wartle drank his bottle of ale, things on the menu began to look cheaper and Mrs. Murray smiled when he ordered the second bottle—and was somewhat astonished when he ordered the third, and she cancelled the order for the fourth.

"Ye'll drink no more, sure ye're blink-eyed now. Give 'im his hat, waiter."

"Hi hay—hay—hain't 'ad ha bo'le hale hin two years."

"Faith, an' ye have enough now to do fer two years more—come out of there, that's the kitchen."

"Do you want a cab, Mrs. Murray?" the waiter asked.



"Hi hay—hay—hain't 'ad bo'le hale hin two years"

"No, sure he needs the walk—he'll be all roight whin he gits outside."

"This 'as been ha lovely hevening," he mumbled as they stopped at Mrs. Murray's steps—and when he bent over to kiss her hand, the moth-eaten hat fell off and rolled out onto the pavement, and to make sure that it would not fall off again until he reached home, Mrs. Murray pulled it well down on the back of his head until it rested on both ears.

"Ye're all roight now, ain't ye? Ye know where ye are, don't ye?"

"Sure, Hi'm hin 'Eaven." He chuckled as he waddled up the street, waving his chubby hand back over his shoulder.

CHAPTER VIII

THE silk shades in the large drawing-room windows of the Kent mansion, which looked out on Fifth Avenue, were drawn, and the elegantly furnished room was delicately lighted with a large chandelier whose small electric bulbs were hidden under the soft sun-colored globes, that matched the golden tinted damask which covered the walls and gave the large room a glow of peaceful summer sunset. Rosamond sat in a large silk upholstered chair reading a book whose hero reminded so much of the man she thought was Mr. Weatherbee's secretary. The big sliding doors of the adjoining dining-room that looked out into the conservatory were open, and the servants had finished arranging the table for the elaborate luncheon for the man they little dreamed was sauntering along on the opposite side of the street locating the house from the corner of his eye—wondering if he would have the courage to enter when the time came.

"I think the table is as you wish it, Ma'am,"

the servant remarked politely, and after he had repeated the words the second time and waited for a reply, he stepped in front of Miss Kent and forced a low cough that gained her attention.

"I say, I think the table is as you wish it, Ma'am."

After she had glanced over the table carefully, she inquired how many brands of cigars were at the "Guest of Honor's" plate, and the servant smiled when he informed her that he had obeyed her orders and bought two of every good brand he could think of.

"You may close the doors, if you will, Henry." She resumed her seat in the large plush chair and wandered off among the pages of her book.

After Helen had entered the room and remained silent for almost a minute, which was an exceedingly long time for her, she inquired of her father's whereabouts in a voice that was somewhat suppressed with fear and didn't display any great desire to be informed that he was within a hearing distance and when she learned, through Rosamond's half-unconscious

reply, that he was up in his room, she spoke in a natural tone, which usually brought a reply.

"He is always home when the club meets here and it makes him wild."

After she had given Rosamond sufficient time to reply and decided that her presence was not as important as the book, she seated herself on the arm of her sister's chair and peeked over her shoulder long enough to become interested in the title.

"What are you reading?"

" 'An Author's Life,' and the character of the author reminds me so much of Mr. Weatherbee's secretary."

"Is it good for anything?"

"Yes, it is a beautiful story and the character of the author is so quaint and witty. I love those droll, witty types."

"You are always admiring some freak. I wonder if Mr. Weatherbee will come?"

Rosamond's eyes wandered from the book as she unconsciously lowered it to the arm of the chair.

"He said he would in his note. What time is mother coming?"

"She 'phoned that she was on her way over. I can't wait until she comes."

"Why, you big baby, she has only been away one night."

"Oh, it isn't that, but I want to tell her about us finding Marguerite's picture in Mr. Weatherbee's studio. Isn't that the strangest thing you ever heard of?" and even Helen's fluttering mind rested on the strange coincidence long enough to remain silent for some few seconds.

The sound of their mother's voice greeting the servant in the reception hall brought the two girls to their feet.

"Here is mamma now," and Helen was the first to be folded in her mother's arms, though Rosamond's slight figure was held tightly in the same two arms for many seconds after and one might have thought from the affectionate greeting, that the mother had been absent for many weeks instead of but one night and only a few squares away in the same city.

"What is the trouble with father?"

"Nothing much, I guess he just wanted a day off. How is Grandma?"

"In perfect health," and Mrs. Kent's voice

simply bubbled with affectionate enthusiasm. "Why, she is just the healthiest old dear you ever saw. How is your luncheon coming on, Rosamond?"

"All right so far."

"Going to invite me?" Mrs. Kent asked with an inquiring smile.

"I wish I could."

"Who is the guest of honor today?"

"Mr. Weatherbee, the gentleman who wrote the beautiful poem I recited at the entertainment."

"Oh! is he coming?"

"He promised to."

"Rosamond hasn't seen him yet and she's in love with him."

"Helen, please don't be so smart."

"What does he look like?" asked Mrs. Kent in a tone of girlish curiosity.

"We haven't seen him," Helen whispered mysteriously, "but his secretary described him. He is tall and has light hair, so that settles it."

Mrs. Kent bent forward in her chair and imitated Helen's mysterious whispering tone. "Where did you see his secretary?"

"At Mr. Weatherbee's studio," Helen returned, opening her eyes wide and lowering her voice as if she were telling a child a ghost story and a gentle note of surprise crept into her mother's voice as she spoke after a short pause.

"Did you go to his studio?"

"Yes, the club asked me to," Rosamond answered in an unsteady, puzzled tone, which changed the atmosphere of humor that Helen had created to one of mild excitement. "I could hardly wait until you came home to tell you of what we found there," and her lips twitched with nervousness as she paused and looked into her mother's wondering eyes, for she knew she was not prepared for the mysterious news she held in store for her.

"What is it?" Mrs. Kent asked in a gentle, firm tone as she took Rosamond's hand and looked at her with a smile of love that would make a bitter confession seem like child verse. When Rosamond informed her that it was a photograph of Marguerite they had found she stepped back and her eyes journeyed from

one girl to the other several times before she spoke.

"Are you sure it was Marguerite?"

"Positive."

"I saw it first!" Helen exclaimed, and her unconscious pride displayed the absence of any deep interest in the subject, and she was somewhat grieved when her remark was passed unnoticed.

"Did you find out where she is?"

"No, Mr. Weatherbee was not in—we saw his secretary—but I didn't want to converse with him on the subject. I thought it better to wait until I saw Mr. Weatherbee himself."

"Was it an old photograph?"

"One of those she had taken just before she was married."

"I was at boarding school when Marguerite was married, wasn't I?" Helen inquired in a more thoughtful, reminiscent tone than she had ever been known to speak in before.

"Yes, you were only eleven years old then, my dear," and Mrs. Kent sighed, her mind back through the eight years which had turned her hair from soft brown to a silvery white.

Helen sat in one of the large chairs and wrinkled her little white forehead in deep thought for several minutes. She knew her mother and sister were not aware of the information she had gained regarding Marguerite's husband and while she wasn't proud of the method she used to enlighten herself on the subject, she was not at all ashamed.

"Is Marguerite's husband still in prison?" she asked quietly and deliberately, then gazed somewhat reproachfully at her mother and Rosamond, who were so shocked by the question that they sat speechless for many seconds.

"Why, Helen!" Mrs. Kent gasped; "who said he was in prison?"

"Rosamond."

"Why, Helen!"

"I heard you and mother talking about it."

"When?"

"Oh, a long time ago."

"You listened?"

"Certainly I listened," she remarked calmly. "You or mamma never tell me anything, so I have to listen."

The forced note of gentle reproach in Mrs.

Kent's voice failed to conceal her great love which she unconsciously showed in spite of her attempt to be severe.

"Helen, I am ashamed of you!"

"Well, I don't care if you are, I'm tired of being the baby in this house. You and Rosamond have more secrets and when I come into the room, you both cough and start talking about the weather. You never tell me anything."

"Because you can't keep anything to yourself, my dear, that is why we never tell you anything, and you're old enough to know better. I have often felt it my duty to tell you about Marguerite, but didn't because I was afraid of you repeating it."

"Well, I should know. She is my sister and it is your duty to tell me. I know that she ran away and married against father's wish and by listening I learned that her husband is in prison. I would rather have you tell me the particulars than hear it from some stranger."

"Helen, do you wish to speak in that tone of voice to me," her mother asked quietly, "or are you forgetting?"

"I'm forgetting," she replied regretfully, after a brief silence, as she knelt at her mother's side and squeezed her hand affectionately. "What is he in prison for?"

"Before they were married he forged your father's name on a check, but father spared him to save a scandal. We both begged Marguerite not to marry him. Then father forbade her and she ran away and married in spite of anything we could say or do. Shortly after they were married he committed another forgery and was sent to prison and died there."

"Haven't you ever heard from her since?"

And her lips trembled as she tried to utter a "No" that was smothered with heavy sobs. "Oh, if she only knew what I have suffered she would surely write to me," and her head fell to her hands and shook with bitter grief.

Rosamond smoothed her white hair tenderly and drew her head affectionately to her breast, though her own eyes were moistened with tears and her voice broke with emotion when she spoke.

"It is not because Marguerite is cruel, mother, that she doesn't write. If she were

starving her pride would not permit her to ask for food or tell of her sufferings."

"And I'm afraid she is suffering—I feel sure of it."

"Something tells me she isn't. She looked so happy in her photograph—so peaceful. She looked as she did the last time I saw her—she seemed to speak to me, and something tells me that we are going to find her—and she is coming home."

Mrs. Kent raised her head slowly and with a feeble, hopeful smile whispered the words half to herself: "Coming home!"

"I feel sure of it," Rosamond continued. "I don't know why, but I do. It all seems so strange that I should be sent to call on this man whom we have never met and find her photograph there. It seems like a good omen, and I am positive we are going to find her." And a sign of hope crept into the three sad faces as Mrs. Kent took each of the girls' hands and crowded a smile through her tears and forced a cheerful note into her voice. "We'll hope—and trust—and pray."

The click of the heavy oak library door sent

a warning glance from each to the other and they dried their eyes quickly and sat in different chairs.

"Are you going to tell father?" Helen whispered.

"No," Mrs. Kent replied in a still lower whisper, mechanically clearing her throat and trying to manufacture a conversation regarding the luncheon while she fussed nervously with her small lace handkerchief.

"Dick" Kent, as he was commonly called by members of the stock exchange, strolled leisurely from his library. His hands were pushed deep into the pockets of his dark trousers and the end of a long black cigar, which protruded from the lengthy gold-trimmed amber cigar holder that he held between his two heavy, clean shaven lips, scarcely extended as far forward as his stomach. What white hair there was left, on the sides and back of his head, stood straight on its end, which was caused by the many visits from his nervous fingers. His deep, harsh voice, which would bluff any New York cab horse into stepping lively, was understood, though not always admired by his family.

"Hello, you've been crying!" was his greeting to Mrs. Kent when he entered the drawing room and removed the cigar from his lips long enough to kiss her on the cheek. "What's the trouble?" and Mrs. Kent murmured a faint "Nothing" as he stood before her waiting for an explanation.

"Yes, there is!" and he raised his voice to a key that would have frightened a stranger.

"She cried when we told her you were too ill to go to your office," Helen exclaimed in a tone of mock sympathy, then hurried to her mother's side and held her hand and patted it tenderly.

Kent threw his head back and grunted a conceited laugh, which told his pride had been touched. "Oh, there's nothing the matter with me—a little cold, that's all," and he started for the library and addressed Rosamond without turning.

"What time are the celebrities coming?"

"At two."

"Is Miss Butterwing coming?" he asked with a touch of sarcastic humor.

"I think so."

"Let me know when she arrives, will you?"

"Why?"

"I want to go up to my room."

His wit was responded to by the "family laugh" that was always pitched in the same key—delivered in the same tempo and never consisted of more than three ha ha's.

Though Helen had often doubled her weekly allowance by tucking on a few extra ha ha's at one of his pet jokes, "She won't bother you to-day," she said with a great deal of assurance. "She'll be after Mr. Weatherbee."

Kent paused and spoke without turning, after he had delivered a few heavy clouds of smoke from his cigar. "Who is Mr. Weatherbee?"

"Mr. Weatherbee is the Guest of Honor to-day," Rosamond answered, and her unconscious enthusiasm only made Mr. Kent more curious.

"Who is he?" he asked sharply without removing the cigar from his lips.

"An author," was Rosamond's timid reply.

"Of what?" Kent grunted.

"I have only read two of his poems that he

gave to the Society—I have never met him.”

Kent jerked the cigar from his lips, and walked toward Rosamond, eyeing her severely. “Never met him and inviting him to your home?”

“It is customary to invite a strange author as a guest of honor to our luncheon.”

“Do any of the ladies of your Club know him?” When Rosamond shook her head and whispered a positive “No” he stepped back in utter surprise and was silent many seconds before he found words to express his astonishment.

“Rosamond, I don’t approve of this. You shouldn’t invite a person to your home until you know something of him. I wish your society wouldn’t use your home to entertain men whom they have never met. You know, Rosamond,” and he stepped forward and placed his heavy hand on her shoulder, and lowered his harsh voice until it mellowed into a key of rough sympathy, “we were taught one sad lesson by allowing a man to call here whom we didn’t know.”

“We think this man is a gentleman,” and the

note of sincerity in her voice only augmented his savage gruffness—he gripped her shoulder and shook it until she winced, though his brutal clutch was meant for affection.

“You should be sure, my dear, you should be positive.” He entered the library—slammed the heavy door and sank in the massive leather chair and tried to smoke away the misery that his many millions hadn’t kept from entering his palace door.

CHAPTER IX

KENT'S advice, which was based on the facts that had caused so many heart aches in his family, left the three ladies sitting with bowed heads and their minds pondering over the past and each one silently asking themselves if he were right. Mrs. Kent favored his opinion to a degree, but was undecided as to what step her husband would take toward the strange man if he knew he possessed a photograph of their daughter and the knowledge of her whereabouts. One deep sigh followed the other until Helen's sympathy on the subject had become exhausted and she became somewhat impatient with herself and everyone concerned.

"Oh, don't mind him," she grunted. "He has a bad case of indigestion."

The unexpected remark and the pouty, jerky tone in which it was delivered, brought her mother and Rosamond half way back to earth, and though neither spoke, the humorous expression of their eyes as they glanced at the

child explained their opinion of her incapability to be serious for more than a minute at a time, no matter how fatal the subject might be.

The butler appeared at the door and announced Mr. Thisby. The words had scarcely left his lips before Helen exclaimed, "Show him in quick!" and the butler failed to conceal his broad smile as he hurried away. Helen's boisterous manner surprised her sister and shocked her mother, but they didn't succeed in hiding the fact that they were also amused.

"What on earth is he calling at this hour for?" Rosamond asked in a voice that was equally blended with astonishment and annoyance.

"Because I told him to."

"Now remember, Helen, don't ask him to stay to lunch," and Rosamond marked each word with an emphatic nod of her head.

"Oh, he doesn't want to stay," Helen answered in a voice of exaggerated pride.

"He'd stay if you gave him half an invitation."

"You shouldn't mind him," Mrs. Kent remarked casually. "I should think you would

be so used to him that you wouldn't notice him, and Mrs. Thisby likes to have him come over here because then she knows where he is. I don't mind him; he seems just like a girl to me."

When Rosamond and her mother left the room, Helen seated herself and pretended to read the book Rosamond had forgotten, though she was gazing several inches above the top of the book and listening attentively for Thisby's voice, and when he "ahemmed" politely, she mechanically dropped the book and exclaimed in a forced dramatic tone: "Oh, how you frightened me!"

"I'm jolly well sorry, I thought you knew I was here, don't you know."

"Well, I didn't, and I'm not aware of the fact yet." She picked up her book—held it within a few inches of her eyes and smiled behind its pages.

"Really now, stop capering, don't you know. Aren't you going for a spin?"

"Certainly not, you know the Club is giving a luncheon here today in honor of Mr. Weatherbee," and she turned several pages of the book over hurriedly.

"But you don't care anything about the blooming Club!"

She rose to her feet slowly and drew her shoulders up until they almost covered her ears, then spoke in a whispering gasp that would have frightened herself if she hadn't had such a struggle to keep from laughing, "How dare you call it a blooming Club?" and she sank into the chair with disgust and pretended to read, but was not aware that she was holding the book upside down.

"Bless my soul, I'm only jesting. You said yesterday you didn't care about remaining to the luncheon and if I'd call you would go for a spin, don't you know."

"Well, if I did I have changed my mind. I wish to remain and meet Mr. Weatherbee," and she emphasized Mr. Weatherbee with a vengeance as she noticed she was holding the book upside down.

"Oh, tommyrot, and are you going to remain in the house all the blooming afternoon just to meet that blithering idiot?"

After she had gazed at him for several seconds with a tragic expression of contempt,

she remarked quietly, using her shoulders to help accentuate her disgust, "You are positively vulgar."

Though Thisby was aware that she was playing another one of her dignified roles, he was somewhat puzzled at the quiet method she had chosen, and a pleading note crept into his small, whiny voice as he advanced a few steps toward her chair.

"Well, he is; he's a blithering ass, upon my soul he is," and his worried, apologetic tone pleased her childish vanity and she held the book close to her face to hide her smile, continuing in her low tone, which was humorously sarcastic: "I'm going to tell Rosamond, and she will tell Mr. Weatherbee and I hope he'll thrash you good!"

"And I suppose you'd be jolly well glad to help him, I'm thinking really."

"Yes, I would, speaking in such a rude way of a man with brains," and she threw a glance of contempt over the top of her book that silenced Thisby for several seconds, but after he had recovered and adjusted his tie, he seemed to take on new courage.

"Brains!" he exclaimed in a braggadocious tone. "Just because he wrote a few blithering poems that have put all the ladies daft."

"His poems are simply beautiful," Helen replied in a high, taunting key, raising her eyes to the ceiling and shaking her head in admiration.

"Anyone can write poems if they care to waste time that way, don't you know. Just to show you how easy it is, I scribbled one off last night, before I retired, and I'll wager my head it's more to the point than Weatherbee's, upon my word it is really."

Helen quickly forgot the part she was playing and jumped to her feet. "Did you really write a poem?"

"Upon my word," Thisby replied as he removed a small piece of paper from the pocket of his waistcoat.

"Read it," and she clapped the covers of her book together, sank in the chair and listened earnestly, and after he had read a few lines he was interrupted by her long drawn out "Oh," that seemed to last a minute, then gazed reproachfully into his guilty eyes. "You hypocrite, that is in this month's Smart Set."

"Upon my word I wrote it," and he held the poem, which was written in his own handwriting, close to her eyes.

"Yes, you wrote it, but you copied it out of the Smart Set."

"Well, I wrote it, anyway," he returned with a smile. "Oh, Helen, don't rig me; on your word, aren't you going for a spin?"

"No, I'm going to stay for the luncheon."

"Then by Jove, I stay, too!"

"You can't."

"I will, upon my word, if you don't go for a spin—I stick," and he sat in the chair, crossed his legs, folded his arms and formed a picture of defiance, which succeeded to make her forget the dignified role she had been playing and be quite her excited self.

"You can't, I tell you, Mr. Weatherbee is the guest of honor and there are no other men allowed."

"I'll sit in the library," he answered firmly.

"You can't, papa is in there."

"I'll smoke him out with one cigarette."

"I dare you to smoke a cigarette in there!"

"I know what I'll do," and he clapped his

hands together as if a great thought had arrived: "I'll go in and let the governor guy me 'til luncheon time and—"

"You can't," interrupted Helen, who was becoming extremely worried at the persistent attitude he had taken. "There are no other men permitted to the luncheon but Mr. Weatherbee."

"But if he doesn't come you'd be jolly well glad to have me here to fill up the gap, don't you know."

"But he is coming."

"Well, I can sit in there while you are at luncheon and let the Governor guy me and we'll take a spin after—a jolly happy thought, don't you know—really it is, I must explode it to the Governor," and he entered the library prepared for his usual guying, which always terminated with some sound business advice.

After his feeble tap on the door had been answered by Kent's gruff "Come in," he broke the several seconds of chilled silence that greeted him with a bold, "Howdy, Governor," that was answered by an unwelcome grunt followed by another cold wave of silence which

amused Thisby more than it frightened him, for he had been a sort of a plaything around the Kent home too many years to be frozen out by Mr. Kent refusing to enter into a conversation, and sitting with his feet up on the desk, leaving nothing for Thisby to see but the back of his head.



ROSAMOND

CHAPTER X

HELEN, knowing the frame of mind her father was in, his opinion of Thisby, his usual attitude toward him unless he wished to joke with him about the color of his tie, waistcoat, or the stripes in his shirt, which were seldom any other than a bright red, watched the library door with a great deal of anxiety for several minutes, and when Thisby failed to return, her surprise and curiosity led her ear close to the keyhole.

"Has he gone?" Rosamond whispered in a tone of delight when she entered the room.

"Yes," Helen replied, tiptoeing away from the keyhole. "He has gone in there," and her small, white hand trembled when she pointed to the door of the library.

"Why didn't you send him home?" Rosamond inquired impatiently.

"I just couldn't get him to go—I tried and tried, and he absolutely refused."

The names of the Misses Curtis, Page and Alldwin, three members of the "Ten Club,"

were accurately announced by the butler and each one was greeted affectionately by Rosamond.

Though Helen welcomed each lady with a sincere clasp of the hand, their smartly cut gowns and attractive hats claimed a large share of her attention and as her longing eyes rested on Marjorie Page's large white hat, she wondered if it would be removed during the meeting long enough to see if it was as becoming to her as it was to Marjorie.

"Are we the first here?" Miss Curtis asked. "We came early on account of the business meeting before luncheon."

"I hope all the girls come early today," Rosamond answered eagerly, "so we can have a good, long meeting just about business."

"I was telling Ione," and Miss Alldwin looked at Rosamond as if she hoped to gain her approval, "that I think it would be a good idea to impose a fine on any of us girls who mention gowns, hats, opera, or anything that isn't connected with the club, during the meeting."

"I think it would be a capital idea," Rosamond exclaimed, and Helen suggested that

they all remove their hats and have them where they wouldn't be seen during the meeting, and she was quite disappointed when her suggestion was passed by with a kindly smile.

Miss Curtis became extremely enthusiastic when Rosamond asked her how her little patient was doing, and the unconscious love with which she described the way it was learning to walk made one almost wish they were a crippled child being cared for by a member of the "Ten Club."

"We have built on a board a little sort of a fence that just comes up to his waist—no, there are two fences, one on either side of this board and he walks between the fences, hangs on with each little hand while he drags his little feet along. It is simply wonderful the way he is improving. What do you suppose he said to me this morning when I called to take him out in the car? He was standing between the little fences when I went in, and he looked up at me and laughed and tried to shake the fence with his tiny hand and yelled: 'I got 'egs.'"

"How long have you been caring for this one, Ione?"

"Almost a year."

"Could he walk at all when you first took him?"

"No, he had never touched his little feet to the floor."

"Well, my youngster's back is as straight as my hand," and as Rosamond held out her hand, she was interrupted by Miss Page, who was anxious to tell of her little patient whom she was about to dismiss in perfect health, but the arrival of Miss Sprague and Miss Seward delayed her pleasure, and Grace Sprague's hat gave Helen an unexpected pleasure that she hadn't dreamed of, for she hadn't thought of anything more beautiful than Marjorie Page's hat, but as her large blue eyes traveled from one to the other, she couldn't decide which she would look best in. Miss Page made another unsuccessful attempt to tell of her little patient, for Grace Sprague took the floor and her unconscious enthusiasm enabled her to hold their attention until she had given an imitation of how her little Towser could run.

"He can actually run, girls," she exclaimed in a tone so high that her voice broke before

she completed the sentence. "We took his little steel jacket off yesterday and he just screamed with joy and ran around the room."

Miss Page rose once more to inform them of the success she had been having when Edith Seward's eagerness led her to the center of the room to describe how her little girl's head was being carried in a frame that rested on her shoulders. Miss Page listened politely until she thought the child had had its share of description and she finally lectured on her case until Mary Cradduck and Catherine Chapin arrived, then the subject was changed just long enough to exchange a friendly, familiar greeting, each girl calling the other by her given name and the atmosphere of long acquaintance and sincere friendship for each other seemed to make interruptions a thing of welcome, so Mary Cradduck silenced everything by exclaiming: "Listen, girls!" and described her patient as a soldier, six years of age, whose name was Mike Finn, named after his father, the late Mike Finn. "The first request I made of his mother was to have Mike's red hair cut, and during my absence the economi-

cal Mrs. Finn cut Mike's hair herself and I wish you could see it. Rosamond, I wish you could see it."

"What is the case?" Rosamond inquired eagerly.

"Limb trouble."

"Is it curable?"

"Yes, I'll bet that little tad will be playing football in six months."

"It is your turn now, Catherine," Rosamond remarked tenderly, as she noticed Miss Chapin who had been listening quietly to the encouraging descriptions that each girl had given of her patient and Rosamond saw from the sad expression of her eyes that she was not anxious to talk of her case, so she changed the subject by joyfully exclaiming: "Girls, aren't you delighted to know that Ida is going to become a member today?"

"Isn't it fine?" several of the girls answered with a sincerity that might make one think they were welcoming the home-coming of an absent sister.

"Everyone just loves Ida, anyway," Miss Seward remarked. "She has seemed like a

member for a long time. She loves children and she has been taking care of a little tike for almost a year. Out of all the names on the waiting list, Ida's was the only one suggested for membership. It was certainly a great compliment to her. We are lucky to get her. We need her; she is a worker."

The names of Miss Butterwing and Miss Lombard were gently announced by the butler and each girl rose to welcome the new member and waited their turn to clasp her hand and greet her with affectionate congratulations.

If Mr. Gibson and Mr. Christy could have had a few minutes in the corner, unnoticed by the ten young ladies as they unconsciously smiled and chatted in a circle under the sun-tinted light from the large chandelier, they would have given the lovers of their drawings something they would never forget.

"Isn't she the lucky girl?" Miss Butterwing asked.

"Think how lucky we are," responded Rosamond, "to secure a worker like Ida in our Club."

"I think so, too," was the mild ejaculation

from several of the girls who didn't quite catch the meaning of Miss Butterwing's remark.

"Oh, yes, the acknowledgment of our luck was shown in our selection—I mean that Ida is lucky to be made a member today when we are entertaining an unknown author, and if I am not mistaken, he has been the cause of a few new hats to be worn today, hasn't he?" and she smiled at one or two of the girls whom she suspected of having made a special effort to dress more becomingly than usual for this particular luncheon, and some of the girls did confess that they had thought of Mr. Weatherbee when they were deciding what gown they would wear.

"Tell us about him, Rosamond—what is he like?" Miss Page requested eagerly as she sat on the large settee followed by as many of the girls as could crowd themselves between its ends. Each girl expressed an anxious desire to hear of the poet as they seated themselves and waited patiently for Rosamond.

The sad expression which had unconsciously crept into her eyes as she thought of Marguerite's picture caused several of the girls to re-

mark in a disappointed tone: "Oh, he isn't coming!"

"Yes, he is," Rosamond answered quickly when she realized she had been standing in the center of the room speechless for several moments. "In the first place," she continued in a tone in which she forced sufficient enthusiasm to conceal her grief, "I haven't met Mr. Weatherbee. I met his secretary, a most charming character, quite as quaint as the studio itself, and after we had waited for Mr. Weatherbee for some time, his secretary said there was a chance of his not coming to the studio that day, so I wrote him a very urgent note telling him what a decided hit his poem had made with the audience and especially with the ladies of the club and that we insisted on his accepting our invitation, so the next day I received a note written by Mr. Weatherbee himself on a little sheet of plain paper such as authors use, saying: "With grateful appreciation, I accept the kind invitation of the 'Ten Club.' Faithfully yours, John Weatherbee."

"Three cheers for Rosamond," Miss Butterwing exclaimed, and the nine girls applauded

earnestly with their white gloved hands as they cheered Rosamond, who bowed playfully.

"Girls, I wish you could see his studio. It is like something an artist would paint. I just hated to come away," and when Rosamond finished her flowery description of John Weatherbee's home in the attic, each girl was leaning far forward in her chair picturing the tiny room with the worn rag carpet, the broken rocker and the one small window, as a spot used for inspiration, little dreaming that the man whom they expected to entertain so lavishly in the Kent mansion knew no other home and was at that moment sitting in the broken rocker with his elbows on his knees and his face buried in his hands, wondering if he had done right in accepting their invitation.

Miss Butterwing suggested the meeting be called to order and all the business details of the club attended to before the Guest arrived, and Rosamond led the way to the adjoining room, which had been carefully arranged for the purpose. Helen's longing gaze followed Marjorie Page's large white hat until Rosamond closed the door and shook her lace hand-

kerchief at Helen and smiled affectionately, saying: "We won't be long, Kiddie."

The nine young ladies seated themselves in the comfortable chairs that were arranged in the form of a horseshoe facing a large mahogany table, at which Miss Butterwing sat, ready to conduct the meeting, and the serious, friendly attention that each girl bestowed upon their leader was extremely unusual for a ladies' club. No gavel was used to call the meeting to order or to stop the buzz of conversation. Each girl sat silently with her eyes resting tenderly on Miss Butterwing. She did not rise to address the club, but sat with her hands resting on the table and spoke in a colloquial tone.

"Girls, the object of this meeting today, which we term a business meeting, is to welcome Ida as a member of the 'Ten Club' and for her sake I shall state as briefly as possible its history. The organization covers a period of over thirty years; some of our mothers were its original members. It was started by ten girls who were anxious to do something more than chat their lives away around a tea table. Out of a large social circle there were only ten

of these girls who got together and decided that they would give at least an hour of their time each day to some crippled child under the age of ten, whose parents were unable to give it proper medical attention. They engaged two of the most celebrated specialists in New York to take charge of these cases. It is the wish of each member to find some crippled child regardless of race or religion, place it in charge of our physicians and spend an hour each day with the child, doing what she can do to benefit and educate it. We have the names of over three hundred cases which have been cured during the life of this club. Some have turned out to be prominent business men here in New York. There are no rules or duties known to the club. Everything is done through love. No name, photograph or statement of any child or case is given to any newspaper. Any girl who marries becomes a retired member and her work with the club ceases," and Miss Butterwing laughed aloud as she said: "I guess that is done to enable her to give her husband an hour of her time each day. There are no initiation fees or dues attached to the

club. The physicians are paid semi-annually from an equal collection from each member, which they usually collect from 'father,' and if he doesn't pony up at the request of his daughter he is called upon by the entire club, armed with hat pins and we have never failed to collect. We called on Mr. Kent once, and after we had collected we fined him the price of a lunch for our trouble. We like to make these calls, so after you have made a polite request and they don't shell out, just report it to the club and it will do the rest and lunch at his expense.

"The literary side of our club is left to the individual taste and desire of each member. We hold a meeting which is followed by a luncheon every month for the purpose of discussing opera, drama, poetry, or any subject which a member wishes to introduce. We give a benefit performance each year for the club, but this performance is not known or referred to as a benefit. It is advertised as 'The "Ten Club's" Annual Amateur Performance' given exclusively by the members. Each girl takes part and does what she can to make it a suc-

cess. Rosamond was the bright particular star of our last performance. For these performances we advertise for one act plays, poems and songs by unknown authors. Our last entertainment was the most successful one we have ever given. Rosamond acted as manager, stage manager and general director, and she can give us the particulars. Is there anything that I have forgotten to say, Rosamond?" Miss Butterwing asked as she rose to give her the chair.

"You did beautifully," and the ladies showed their appreciation by applauding generously.

Rosamond stood behind the table and faced her companions with a pleasant smile; it was really a proud smile, a smile that might have expressed a tiny note of conceit, for she was more than pleased with her managerial efforts. The entertainment had gone off smoothly and the financial returns were far beyond their expectations.

"As you all know, girls, our entertainment was simply a triumph both artistically and financially—just think, everything is paid and we only lost two hundred sixty-three dollars

and thirty-five cents," and each lady cheered and applauded vociferously for many seconds. "And we were just as great a success artistically as we were financially," she continued with increased pride. "Of course, the entertainment was a little too long, but we didn't start until two and were out before seven, and everyone remained until it was over but the men. I guess they wanted to smoke," she said as if she were trying to apologize for their leaving. "Mamma says (for an entertainment given by girls) it is the best one she ever saw in all her life. Some of us forgot our lines in the play, but mamma said the audience expected us to so they were not disappointed. What else is there to say—Oh, yes, Butty and I bought the prize for Mr. Weatherbee, it's upstairs in my room. I'll send and get it when we finish here and you can see if you like it. If you don't we can change it for something else. That is all I can think of to say—is there anything I have forgotten?" and her question was answered by another outburst of applause.

Ida Lombard was acknowledged a member of the "Ten Club" after each one of the girls

had initiated her with a rugged hug and a tender kiss on the cheek and the meeting was thrown open for the discussion of any subject that might be introduced and John Weatherbee's poem was discussed, analyzed and pronounced a masterpiece.

CHAPTER XI

THISBY'S many efforts to interest Kent on such subjects as the weather, automobiles, golf, tennis, bridge, theaters, teas and luncheons proved useless. He replied to some with a grunt, some with silence and others by a nervous tapping on the arm of his chair, but 'Thisby's courage remained firm and after he had watched the back of Kent's head for many minutes, waiting for a reply to his last question, he informed Mr. Kent that he had forgotten to put his watch on and would like to know the time.

"I haven't my glasses," Kent grunted as he held his watch before 'Thisby.

"It will soon be time for the bloomin' luncheon," he said as Kent walked out of the library and closed the door with a slam. "I hope the beggar doesn't come," 'Thisby thought to himself, and he smiled at the rage he had worked Kent into.

Kent paced the drawing room floor with his

hands clasped behind his back, puffing savagely at his black cigar.

"Are you feeling any better, Richard?" Mrs. Kent asked in a sympathetic voice as she entered the room.

"No," he replied gruffly. "How can I get a chance to feel better? I can't get a corner to myself in my own house!"

"Why don't you sit in the library?"

"I can't sit in there when that stick of candy is around talking his silly head off."

"Who?"

"Thisby. Now I'm ill, and if he lights a cigarette in this house, I'll ask him to go home. I wish, dear, you would ask this club to have their luncheons some place else. The idea of inviting a strange man here whom they have never seen and know nothing of!"

"The club invited him."

"It is wrong, my dear—it is wrong. He may be someone we would be ashamed to have our children know."

Mrs. Kent sat patiently and listened while he tore through the bitter past that was gnawing at his heart and causing him many sleepless hours which no one knew of but himself.

Weatherbee slowly mounted the marble steps of the Kent mansion and pressed the electric button firmly. He had pictured the situation and studied it until his mind was unbalanced as to whether he was right or wrong in accepting the invitation. He saw Warner's picture of the cad who would permit a worn suit of clothes to prevent him from meeting a friend who sought his acquaintance, one whom he admired as he had never admired before, and he pressed the button again—and the door opened.

"Who shall I say?" the butler inquired politely when he saw there was no card.

"Mr. Weatherbee," he answered softly.

Kent stood motionless in the center of the room when Weatherbee's name was announced, and when Mrs. Kent requested the butler to show him in, Kent started for the library, opened the door and closed it with a crash, when he was met by a cloud of smoke from Thisby's cigarette.

"Hell!" he growled as he returned to the drawing room.

"You talk with Mr. Weatherbee, Richard,

until the ladies finish their meeting. They won't be but a few minutes. I'll try and send Thisby home."

"If it weren't for his mother I'd send him home," Kent mumbled half to himself, "and I would do it in a way that would wrinkle some of those wide, foolish stripes in his trousers, too."

Mrs. Kent explained in a tender, motherly way how busy the girls were going to be and that Mr. Kent was really ill, but it made no serious impression on Thisby; in fact, Mr. Kent's condition amused him and he simply laughed when Mrs. Kent suggested that he run home for awhile and come over tomorrow.

"If he's ill, why doesn't he go to his room and lie down for a bit?" Thisby asked in a tone of amused impatience. "He isn't ill, he's simply ugly. I tried every possible way to entertain him. I talked of everything I could think of and he just simply wouldn't talk. It wouldn't be very considerate of me to go home now. The girls are not sure that Mr. Weatherbee is coming, and if he doesn't come, they may need me to fill in for them. I promised Helen that

I would stick around and I'm not going to break my word with her just because Mr. Kent has a grouch on," and he puffed heroically at his cigarette as he crossed his legs and swung his foot contentedly.

Mrs. Kent sat in silence for a few seconds and offered to 'phone him herself if Mr. Weatherbee didn't come, but Thisby replied that it would be more honorable for him to keep his word and wait.

"I'll be broad-minded about it," he said while he placed the thumb of each hand in the arm-hole of his waistcoat: "If Mr. Kent wants to act peevish and childish about sitting in here and chatting with me, I'll wait upstairs, or any place, but I mustn't go home and break my word to Helen."

Kent paced nervously back and forth in the drawing room and paused under the chandelier as the butler politely bowed John Weatherbee into the room.

Weatherbee's carefully brushed hair, his long thin face, his low white collar that was partly hidden behind a black flowing tie with slightly ravelled ends, his shiny double-breast-

ed blue suit and worn shoes, which had been carefully polished, were taken in by one piercing glance as Kent slowly raised his left hand to remove his cigar and pushed his right hand deep into the pocket of his trousers.

Each man eyed the other carefully, and an expression of bewildered amazement crept into Kent's face as he stepped back on his right foot, drew the left one back slowly and raised himself to the extreme height of his stature. Many thoughts flew through his active mind as he gazed at the careworn character which stood before him, which was so different from any of the many he had pictured since he had heard of the name Weatherbee. His walk in life had never brought him in contact with such a type as now stood before him, for they seldom got beyond his office boy, and never passed his secretary. "What is his game?" he thought to himself as he replaced his cigar and gripped it firmly between his teeth and threw both hands behind his back then stared at Weatherbee in blank amazement. He remembered that Mrs. Kent or Rosamond had told him that they hadn't seen Mr. Weatherbee

himself and that was the only excuse he could find for such a dressed person being in his house, and his attitude became more rigid and his stare more savage while his eyes traveled slowly from Weatherbee's head to his feet.

Weatherbee stood between the silk portieres and met his cold, icy reception with a warm, courageous smile, that flittered away gradually and left his long, thin face with nothing but a twinkling left eye to relieve it of its sad expression.

“He at least does me the honor of being rude,” Weatherbee thought to himself while he tried to master an embarrassing situation, which in spite of its seriousness was becoming somewhat humorous on account of Kent's lion-like manner. He had schooled himself and was quite prepared to meet a group of young ladies and watch with great interest their disappointment at his appearance or entertain them with verses from their favorite poets, or give his honest opinion of the many authors with whose works he was familiar, but he was not ready for the rude, brutal manner in which Kent was receiving him, though the time that

had elapsed during which each man waited for the other to speak gave him an opportunity to call on his judgment to decide what tack he would take. His left eye twinkled until it danced and the right eye seemed to applaud it as they both gazed steadily, though tenderly, at Kent, who still stood like a steel statue, and Weatherbee's lips smiled pleasantly as he spoke in a low, dignified tone that was almost a whisper.

"I am Mr. Weatherbee."

"I am Richard Kent," the latter retorted quickly.

"Oh, father of Miss Rosamond Kent?"

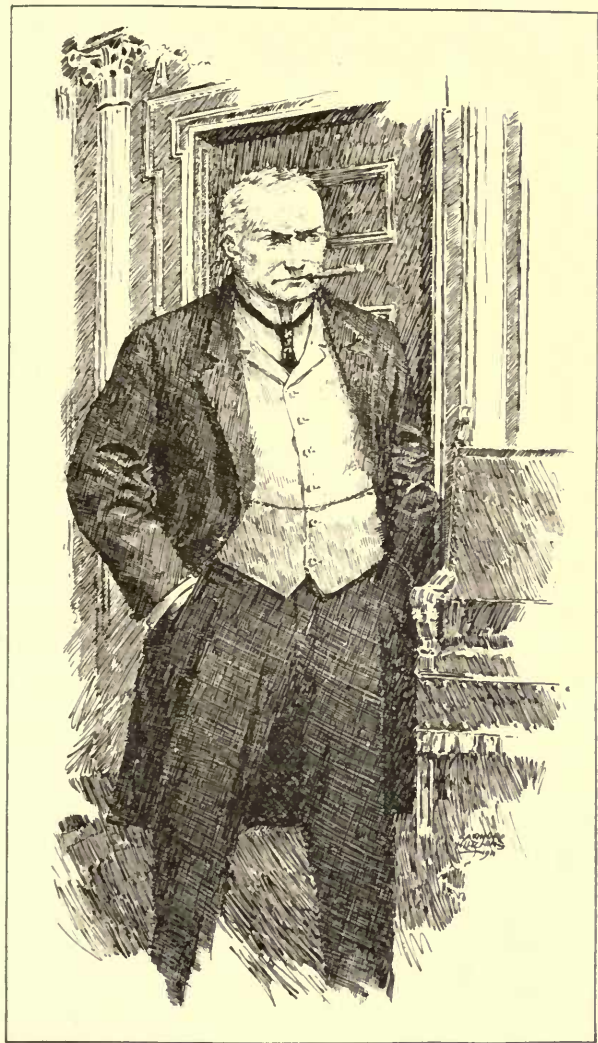
"Yes."

"I am glad to meet you," and Weatherbee bowed politely.

"Will you be seated?" and Kent pointed to a chair just inside of the entrance, and Weatherbee seated himself and whispered an amused "thank you."

"I understand you haven't met my daughter yet."

"Oh, yes, I have had that pleasure," Weath-



*"His coarse, grizzly personality did anything but
frighten Weatherbee"*

erbee replied, forgetting that he had met her as his own secretary.

Kent became puzzled as he hesitated for a few seconds and muttered to himself: "I understood them to say she hadn't met you."

Weatherbee leaned back in the big chair resting his hands on its cushioned arms and studied Kent calmly and carefully as he ran his nervous fingers through his white hair and gazed steadily at the floor. His coarse, grizzly personality, his rude stare and lack of any trace of politeness or civility, did anything but frighten Weatherbee; in fact, it acted as a tonic to his courage and he became disgusted with the atmosphere of the mansion and grew proud of his poverty and his humble home in the attic.

"Where did you meet my daughter?" Kent asked, drawing his head up slowly and searching Weatherbee with half-closed eyes.

"At my studio," Weatherbee answered in a gentle, polite tone, which increased Kent's astonishment and caused him to open his mouth as wide as he did his eyes, and his voice softened with surprise.

"May I ask where your studio is located?"

"On Twenty-ninth Street."

"Where is your home?"

"In my studio."

"Do your parents live in New York?"

"My parents are dead."

Kent stuck the big cigar between his teeth and walked the full length of the large room with his hands clasped behind his back and his head bowed in wonderment.

Weatherbee followed Kent's heavy figure with a sympathetic eye. The wealth he represented faded into dust, the mansion became nothing but cold stone walls, the silk portieres and damask seemed like rags, while his own shiny blue suit felt like velvet.

"It is a study of life that I wouldn't have missed for a fortune," he thought to himself and tried to decide whether he would leave at once or bear the humiliation and remain as a mere student of human nature.

Kent caught his wife's eye as she entered the room, and his sarcastic smile puzzled her until she saw Weatherbee rise from his chair quickly.

"My dear, let me present Mr. Weatherbee—this is Mrs. Kent."

"I am delighted to know you," Weatherbee whispered in an audible tone as he bowed politely and a forced smile that partly covered the unconscious look of surprise that came into her face, and extended her hand gasping in broken syllables: "I—I am—pleased—to meet you."

"I thank you," Weatherbee answered in a firm tone, then pressed her hand gently and tried to make it appear that he hadn't noticed her embarrassment.

"Sit down," Kent ordered as he sank in a chair facing Weatherbee, who stood until Mrs. Kent was seated.

"Mr. Weatherbee says he has met Rosamond," and he gazed steadily at Mrs. Kent who looked with surprise and exclaimed: "Oh, I understood Rosamond to say she hadn't met you."

"I don't understand the situation at all," Kent growled, then started on another nervous pace, but was interrupted by Thisby, who yelled as he entered the room and saw Weath-

erbee: "I jolly well knew it—I told you so—Weather can't come, eh?"

Kent turned suddenly, his eyes flashed and his voice fell to a key of whispering amazement. "That is Mr. Weatherbee, is it not?"

"I'll be jolly well hanged if I know—I hope not—he said yesterday he was Weatherbee's secretary."

A gentle smile of amused defiance came over Weatherbee's face—he watched the three people standing speechless, staring first at him and then at each other.

"Surely—surely," Helen cried in a disappointed tone as she came into the room and saw the four people standing silently gazing into each other's blank faces. "Surely Mr. Weatherbee isn't going to disappoint us at this late hour?" and she stood directly in front of Weatherbee and looked into his eyes reproachfully.

"I think Mr. Weatherbee is going to disappoint you," Weatherbee whispered with a smile, looking tenderly into the child's eyes.

"Isn't this the gentleman you invited to your luncheon?" Kent asked quietly.

"Why, no-o—he is Mr. Weatherbee's secretary, aren't you?"

Weatherbee nodded his head in the affirmative, and his smile broadened as he still gazed on Helen's wide-open eyes.

"Thisby, show the ladies into the library," Kent ordered, then sank in the chair, propped his elbow on its arm, placed his chin in his hand and tried to look through Weatherbee's eyes that seemed to dance with joy at the savage, speechless figure that looked as if it were panting with rage at something it didn't know just where to bite to cause the most painful wound.

Weatherbee sat leisurely in the large chair, folded his hands together, and watched with dignified ease the muscles in Kent's face swell with rage as he sat waiting for an explanation. He smiled with pity at the financial giant who snarled at his rags, and Kent's dog-like rudeness seemed to call forth and accentuate his quiet sympathetic dignity.

"I have been urgently invited to this house," he thought to himself, "and I'll give them a chance to apologize for the manner in which

they have received me or acknowledge that on account of my attire they do not wish to entertain me." Forgetting Kent's presence he closed his eyes and dreamed back and imagined he saw the girl who recited his poem. He saw her standing in his tiny attic room and he heard her say: "Be sure and give this note to Mr. Weatherbee," and he wondered if that gentle voice could ever sound rude, or those large, soft, brown eyes could look with the same brutal contempt with which her father was staring at him now.

The door of the adjoining room opened and closed and those two brown eyes opened wide and that gentle voice became mellow with disappointed surprise as it murmured: "Oh, isn't Mr. Weatherbee coming?"

Weatherbee's "no" sounded like a painful throb from his throat as he stood and shook his head slowly. "He sent me to—to—tell you—that—that it is impossible for him to be with you today, he—he is extremely sorry—and he hopes that—that—circumstances will permit him to attend one of your luncheons later—he is most grateful for having been honored with an invitation—and—"

The butler then opened the library door and announced that Kent's office wished to speak with him over the 'phone on important business.

"This gentleman introduced himself as Mr. Weatherbee," Kent growled sarcastically, then hurried into the library and closed the door with a bang.

Rosamond's face became a study of wonderment. She seemed to unconsciously float to one of the large chairs, sink on its arm, rest her elbow on its back and bury her face in her hand. During the several minutes which flew by in silence, her mind wandered up the narrow stairs into the studio in the attic and she realized the truth.

Weatherbee stood motionless. He hated himself for the cowardly way he had disowned his name on account of the shabby clothes he was now proud of.

"I have disowned my name again," he said to himself bitterly, "but I have done it rather than hurt her by telling her who I am and how I have been received."

"Is Mr. Weatherbee at his studio now?" Rosamond asked quietly without moving.

"No, he—he isn't," Weatherbee answered, as if he had pulled each word from his throat with a struggle.

"Why did you tell me you were Mr. Weatherbee's secretary?" and she placed the other elbow on the back of the chair and rested her forehead in both her hands.

"Because—I—I—"

"Do you think it was quite fair," she interrupted gently, "to permit me to stand in your studio and say all the things I did say about Mr. Weatherbee, thinking he was absent?"

"No, it wasn't. I am sorry and I ask your pardon."

"Why did you do it?"

"I can't tell you now—but—I'd like to tell you sometime later—sometime when things are different."

Rosamond raised her head slowly, her hands fell into her lap, she walked to the back of the chair and drew her finger from one corner to the other many times before she spoke and her voice became mellow with sincerity.

"In spite of anything that has happened between you and my father, I would like to have

you remain to luncheon; the others won't know," and she smiled sympathetically at Weatherbee who stood speechless with admiration. His heart seemed to be beating a hurrah for the girl whose false pride it had throbbed in fear of.

"Believe me, I am most grateful," Weatherbee whispered, "but—I—oh—I couldn't remain now—but later—oh, sometime—later—when—things change—when things change—so to speak—I'll—I'll come to you, and tell you why I was Mr. Weatherbee's secretary."

"I know why," she answered in a tone of encouragement. "Won't you permit me to explain matters to my father and remain?"

"I thank you, but it is impossible for me to remain now."

"Why?"

"I can't tell you now—but—sometime."

"I wish you would," she pleaded. "There is something of great importance that I wish to speak with you about."

"Can't you speak of it now?"

"I'm afraid we haven't time."

"What is it?"

"It is regarding the photograph in the gold frame—standing on the table in your studio."

"That is the photograph of a lady who used to live there in the house."

"Does she live there now?"

"No," Weatherbee answered sadly, "she is dead."

Weatherbee left the room without knowing of the pain his speech caused Rosamond or seeing her face which turned a deathly pale as she staggered and sank into the chair, for the heavy dining room doors had rolled open before he had quite finished speaking and he beheld the gorgeously spread table and the handsomely gowned ladies laughing and chatting and he rushed into the hall, seized his hat and dodged his way down Fifth Avenue studying the experience which he was grateful for.

Rosamond opened her eyes to find Miss Butterwing kneeling at her side and pressing her hand tenderly.

"Alice, I want to go to my room," she sighed as she struggled to her feet.

After Miss Butterwing had left Rosamond in her room with her mother, she entered the

dining room, delivered Rosamond's message to the girls, explaining her absence, and ordered luncheon served.

At Helen's suggestion, she and Thisby were invited to fill the vacant chairs, and he remembered all of his favorite jokes which everyone was familiar with, and Helen prompted him accurately whenever his enthusiasm caused him to omit even a single word.

CHAPTER XII

"THIS is Saturday—today is the day," Warner whispered to himself as he slowly and unconsciously slid his feet along the hot stone walk of Twenty-ninth Street. He held his cane loosely in his hand and tapped it before him carelessly. The noise of the tapping sounded lonely to him. The voice of the huckster seemed to have a sad, muffled, disappointing ring to it. He heard no children laughing or singing to the tune of the hurdy-gurdy. The street seemed quieter and more lifeless than it had ever seemed before.

"I hope it is my imagination," and he trudged along mechanically counting the steps he had taken since he turned the corner.

Wartle greeted him with an unwelcome grunt when he opened the door and closed it before Warner was far enough away to prevent its edge from striking his arm. The creaking of the old stairs sounded differently to him. It was an unwelcome sound that seemed to say good-bye instead of good-morning.

He stood at the head of the stairs in the little attic room holding on to the banister waiting for a familiar voice to welcome him, but no sound came.

"John," he called in a low tone, but there was no answer and he felt his way to the little rocker that squeaked a lonely welcome when his heavy figure sank between its broken arms.

He bent forward and listened eagerly to the sound of the approaching steps on the stairs, but leaned back in disappointment when he recognized Mrs. Murray's breathless "Phe-e-u" as she reached the top step.

"Is Mr. Weatherbee here?" she grunted when she looked about the room, still hanging onto the banister.

"No," Warner answered politely.

"He's always out whin his creditors call," she snarled.

"I'll tell him you called," Warner answered quickly, hoping she would give him the opportunity by not waiting.

"Thank ye fer yer koind offer, but Oi'll wait fer him," and she seated herself on the bed-couch.

"Faith an' ye'er gittin' moighty ginerous in yer old age," and she glared at him sarcastically. "Weatherbee'll pay me what he owes me today er Oi'll know the raison why," she continued in a rasping tone.

"Mr. Weatherbee will pay you every cent he owes you," Warner replied quietly, after a short silence.

"Well, why don't he do it?" she snapped.

"Because he hasn't the money."

"Why don't he go to work an' earn it?" she shouted as she hastened to the back of his chair and leaned over his shoulder.

"He'll pay me what he owes me, and he'll pay what he owes fer this room today, or out he goes," and she tapped Warner on the shoulder roughly with her forefinger as she uttered each word. "It may surprise ye to know that Oi have somethin' to say in this house now."

"Now," Warner grunted humorously. "I never knew you to be stuck for anything to say in this house yet, Mrs. Murray."

"Well, Oi'll have more to say," she retorted. "And Oi'll not let thim impose on poor Mr. Wartle anny longer, he's too ginerous."

Warner drew his open hand across his mouth to hide his smile when he thought of Wartle's generosity. It was no easy task to carry his heavy figure down and up four flights of stairs, but it pained him to listen to the slurs which were being thrown at Weatherbee, so he decided to wait on the street by counting his steps to the corner and back.

Wartle's little, fat figure met him at the stairs and his biting question to Warner of "His Weatherbee hin?" was answered in a taunting tone by Mrs. Murray. "I guess he's hoidin' some place."

"When Mr. Weatherbee comes in, will you please tell him I'll be back?" Warner requested gently.

"Yis, an' we'll tell 'im a few other things," Mrs. Murray yelled.

"Han' you'd better 'urry back hif you want to see 'im," and Wartle hung his bald, shiny head down over the banister and talked loud enough to be heard on the ground floor. "Fur hif 'e don't pay what 'e howes 'e don't sleep hin this room tonight." He straightened his little, round figure, turned and gazed at Mrs. Murray

with a broad grin. "Hi got tired hof waitin' for you to come down stairs, so Hi come hup," and his grin broadened until the corners of his mouth almost touched his large ears, when Mrs. Murray remarked in a satisfied tone: "Ye look a hundred years younger with thim hair mattresses off the soides of yer face," and Wartle informed her with much pride that he was learning to shave himself better than a regular barber.

"Do you know that when Hi shaved myself this mornhin' Hi honly cut my face hin four places and one place was honly ha scratch," and he touched each of the three pieces of sticking plaster gently with the end of his finger.

"Does Weatherbee own annything in this room?" Mrs. Murray snapped, as she glanced around the room carefully as if she were taking an inventory of its contents.

"'E howns the trimmin's, but Hi howns the bed."

"Does he own that book-box?" and she pointed to the quaint little library with its open doors and empty shelves.

"Yes," Wartle replied as he examined it closely as if studying its value.

"Are ye goin' to let 'im take it away?"

"Hi'm not—'e don't take ha bloomin' thing hout hof this 'ouse till 'e pays hevery cent 'e howes me."

"Ye're roight fer once in yer loife. Did ye hire the chambermaid yit?"

"Hi did, han' she's coming Monday morning."

"Is she Irish?" Mrs. Murray asked quickly.

"No, she's French."

"Thim Frinch fairies are dangerous."

"Why?" Wartle murmured in a frightened whisper.

"They have such bad timpers, they're apt to stick ye wid a knoife."

"She seems tame."

"Oi think Oi'll have her move this bid down to the second floor front and bring the bid in there up here. This is a better bid than it is."

"Hi'll tell 'er."

"Ye'll do nothin' of the kind—Oi'll tell her meself, an' ye'll have nothin' to say about the runnin' of this house. Oi'll 'tend to that me-

self, it's a woif's duty to take charge of the house."

Wartle nodded his head slowly and answered in a low feeble tone, "Very well, my dear."

"Have ye had the things made out in moi name?"

"They har made hout hand hin my lawyer's 'and, hand 'e'll give them to you the day we're married."

"Oi must have thim first," and she pointed a warning finger at him as she spoke.

"Hi'll take you hup to 'is hoffice hand let you read them—they hare to be your wedding present from me."

"Have ye got the ring yit?"

Wartle rubbed his fat hands together nervously for a few seconds before he spoke.

"Hi thought you could wear the ring your first 'usband gave you?" and he tried to occupy his guilty mind by moistening the end of his finger on his tongue and wiping an imaginary spot from the corner of his waistcoat, while he waited for Mrs. Murray's reply and hoped that she would look upon the idea from an economi-

cal standpoint and consent to his suggestion, but Mrs. Murray looked at him with contempt for a moment, which seemed like an hour to Wartle, who was still rubbing his waistcoat with his finger and waiting painfully for her reply.

"Not on yer loife," she grunted, "no sickon-hand widdin' rings fer me."

"Very well, my dear," he sighed, "Hi'll get hit this hafternoon."

"Well, ye'd better be gittin' a hustle on ye, if we're goin' to be married Sunday. Have ye saw about havin' the house dicorated?"

"Yes, Hi done just has you told me."

"Remimber, Oi want the main entrance and the front parlor smothered in shamrocks—this is an Irish weddin', and if Oi see an English flower sittin' in moy house, Oi'll fling it out the windey."

"Hi hordered nothing but Hirish shamrocks."

"And none of yer Johnnie-Bull frinds are to be here. Oi've asked Mr. McCarthy, a frind of moine, to stand up wid ye and his sister is goin' to stand up wid me, and Oi've invoited about

fifty of moy friends and Oi'll show ye a toime ye'll be proud of."

"Who his McCarthy?" Wartle inquired meekly.

"He's a cab droiver," Mrs. Murray answered with much pride—"and owns his own cab. He's a foine man, and he's goin' to bring a lot of his frinds."

Wartle didn't disturb any of the sticking plaster on his face by laughing over the unexpected news that Mr. McCarthy was to stand up with him and bring all of his friends. His little hands found their way behind his back and squeezed each other tightly, his head went down slowly until his chin was buried in the rolls of flesh on his neck. He said nothing, but sat on the bed-couch and wondered if they would drink any strong drink or get noisy or rough.

"Carry me up on your back, will you, Dad?" Jack requested as he hung onto the tail of his father's coat and tried to hold him back from going upstairs unless he granted his coaxing demand, and Weatherbee took him by the arms and swung him over his shoulder and mounted

the stairs in time to Jack's singing, "Rub-dub-dub, dub, dub," which was his usual habit every time he ascended the stairs.

"Pound your feet hard on the stairs, Dad, when I say rub-dub-dub."

"I mustn't, it makes too much noise."

"Well, pound them just a little," and Weatherbee satisfied him by making believe he was hitting the steps heavily, though he made no noise.

"There you are," and he stooped over and let Jack climb over his head onto the floor.

Weatherbee removed his hat and greeted Mrs. Murray and Wartle politely, but received no reply. Jack pulled his little, torn straw hat from his head, bowed to Mrs. Murray, saying: "How do you do, Mrs. Murray," then looked at his father with a half-guilty smile and giggled.

"Hello, Wartie." Weatherbee placed his hand over the child's mouth gently and tried to speak severely, though it was an effort to conceal the fact that he was amused at Wartle, who jumped to his feet and looked indignantly at Jack.

"Say 'How do you do, Mr. Wartle?'" and he removed his hand from his mouth and placed it on his head.

Jack repeated the words, "How do you do?" and hesitated as he looked up at his father with a daring twinkle in his eye.

"Mr. Wartle," Weatherbee demanded sternly and Jack obeyed by bowing and emphasizing "Mr." with all the voice he could use. "Dad, may I go down and find the cat?"

"If you don't make a noise."

And he ran downstairs calling "Kitty" in a low, muffled tone.

Weatherbee hung Jack's hat in the small closet, while Mrs. Murray and Wartle sat side by side on the edge of the bed-couch exchanging glances which seemed to ask, "Shall I light on him first, or will you?" but Wartle broke the silence as Weatherbee returned from the closet.

"Hi want to know what you hare going to do habout the rent?"

"And Oi want what ye owe me," put in Mrs. Murray before Weatherbee had had an opportunity to answer Wartle's perplexing question.

Weatherbee stood before his two creditors and spoke kindly. "Mrs. Murray, I am very sorry that I can't pay you now, but I hope to be able to pay you very soon. You have more than earned every cent I owe you and I'm sorry to have kept you waiting so long and you shall be the very first one I shall pay."

"Whin?" she snapped.

"I can't say now—just—when. I don't want to make a promise and have to break it, though I hope for your sake as well as for my own that it will be very soon."

"Hand what habout me?" Wartle grunted sarcastically.

"I'm going to pay you also, Mr. Wartle, but not until I pay Mrs. Murray, for she needs the money more than you do and I'm going to pay her first."

"Hif you can't pay me today, Mr. Weatherbee, you must get hout hof this 'ouse this hafternoon."

Weatherbee was not in a jesting mood, but the picture of Wartle and Mrs. Murray sitting side by side on the edge of the couch as if they had been blown up with dignity, caused his

humor to unconsciously bubble up through his seriousness.

"Not this afternoon, Mr. Wartle?" and he forced a note of surprise into his voice that concealed the fact that he had already prepared to leave.

"This hafternoon," Wartle replied emphatically. "Hand hif you don't get hout, Hi'll call han hofficer," and he looked at Mrs. Murray, who nodded her head and gave him an encouraging wink.

"Oh, well," Weatherbee replied dryly, "if you're going to call an officer, I'll get out without fighting, just as soon as I get my things together."

"You mustn't take hanything that his hin this room hout. What's 'ere belongs to me huntill you pay me my rent. You can take the boy's clothes hand that his hall, but hif you hattempt to take hanything helse, Hi'll 'ave you harrested," and he rose to his feet glaring at Weatherbee, and his little eyes were dancing with nervous anger.

Weatherbee gazed at him several seconds, and his voice fell to a kindly, earnest, sympa-

thetic key. "That won't be necessary, Mr. Wartle, I don't want to take anything but the baby's clothes and my hat." Weatherbee glanced about the room at the little trinkets he had gathered from time to time. "They are of no value to anyone but me," he thought to himself, "if they were Uncle would have them."

"Ye've scared him stiff," Mrs. Murray whispered into Wartle's ear and they watched Weatherbee as he stood with his back toward them gazing at a small pencil drawing.

"Mr. Wartle, these pictures were given to me by a friend. Will you ask whoever takes the room to be careful of them?"

"You can 'ave them has soon has you pay your rent," and he walked to the head of the stairs followed by Mrs. Murray, who paused on the top step long enough to say with a great deal of authority:

"Oi'll take care of thim. Ye know Oi'm to be Mrs. Wartle tomorrow afternoon," and she followed Wartle down the stairs proudly.

"I wish you every happiness, Mrs. Murray," Weatherbee yelled in a kind voice as he leaned over the banister.

"Good-bye," she answered, and Wartle called back in a high, sarcastic squeak: "Hi. hexpect you to get right hout, Mr. Weath-erbee."

"I'll get right out, Mr. Wartle," Weather-bee answered in a gentle promising tone.

He walked to the little window, pulled the top sash down, leaned his elbows on its edge, looked up into the blue, saw two soft, brown eyes, heard a gentle sincere voice saying: "In spite of anything that has happened between you and my father, I would like to have you remain—the others won't know," and he slapped his hard luck in the face with a pleasant smile.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN Weatherbee heard Warner returning he met him at the top of the stairs with a rugged slap on the back.

"Hello, Warner," he said in a jolly tone, but Warner only returned a gloomy "Hello, John," and leaned against the banister and heaved a deep sigh. He knew Weatherbee's voice too well not to recognize the fictitious note of cheerfulness he had forced into it to cover the sad ones which, in spite of his effort, bubbled up through the happy ones often enough to betray the fact that he was not acting.

"He is doing what I knew he would do," Warner thought to himself. "He is smiling through the crack in his heart, a crack big enough to walk through."

Warner's opinion of Weatherbee as an author was still on the same pedestal he had placed it on the first time he had heard his novels read, and he was positive in his own mind that they would be published and make him not only famous, but rich. He had used

the novels as an argument of hope for so many months that Weatherbee laughed every time he referred to them and treated the subject as a joke. He sat on the banister, leaning forward, with both hands resting on the handle of his cane. He searched for something pleasant to say, but found nothing, though his heavy lips moved as he said to himself: "Those novels will be published some day, I'm sure of it. I'm positive of it."

Weatherbee stood in the center of the room, his weight rested on one leg, his right hand hung on his left arm and his chin on the knuckles of the left hand. He studied Warner carefully. He had known him for many years and this was the first time he had ever seen him bow to hard luck. He had always tickled it under the chin and sent it on its way with a smile. He knew Warner was not thinking of himself, and Weatherbee nodded his head in silent gratitude for the love that Warner's sad heart was dealing out to him in aching throbs.

"If they would stand Rosamond Kent out on the curb, I wouldn't take the Kent mansion and all its contents for his friendship," Weatherbee

said to himself, and he walked over and struck Warner a blow on the shoulder with the flat of his hand that removed his hat and sent it to the floor.

"Cheer up, Warner," he yelled in a loud, cheerful voice as he picked up the black slouch hat and drew it down on the back of Warner's head until it almost covered his ears.

"I can't, John, I can't."

"You have got to," Weatherbee growled in a plucky tone. "Do you remember what you said the other day about the old robin in Central Park, that sings for you and how happy it made you, and how it gets jealous when the carriages go by and make a noise, do you remember? Well, I want you to go up there and listen to that robin sing and be happy and forget me and my troubles."

"I can't, John, I can't."

"You must," and Weatherbee's voice trembled with tenacity. "Go up there and smell the green and hear the children play and forget me. Warner, you have been a great help to me—a real friend—and I love you for it. We've had some good times together in the old room

here, and we'll have many more. You know you have always said that I'd be worth a million dollars some day—and we have all that to look forward to, and when it arrives we'll have all those books we've talked about, and I'll read for you; can you see that library we are going to have some day? Can you see it, Warner? Can you see it?"

"I can't see anything but you, without a cent and no place to go," and his heavy voice tried to shake the words out in a firm tone, but each word seemed to stick to his tongue and stumble over his thick lips in separate syllables.

Weatherbee saw that his grief had penetrated his heart and was clinging to its core. He placed his hand on Warner's shoulder and watched the blind eyes that his heart was slowly pumping tears into.

"Why, Warner, you are going back on your own advice—I am ashamed of you," and the two men stood for many minutes without speaking.

Warner had wanted to ask a question, but he hesitated in fear of the answer, and he started it several times before he finished it. "What

are you going to do with little Jack?" He tried to hold his voice in a firm key, but it shook and the tones sounded as if they had been beaten and hammered by a throbbing heart.

"You know, Warner, Jack always comes first. I have prepared for him. He goes over to Mrs. Turner's."

The words sounded like the notes of an old, welcome song to Warner's ears, and they seemed to move and try to show their appreciation. "And you, John, are you going there, too?"

"No," Weatherbee replied cheerfully, "but Jack is fixed."

"Why couldn't you go there, John?" and his excited hand fumbled about until it rested on Weatherbee's shoulder.

"Her house is full, Warner. Every room is taken. She is going to take Jack in with her. I didn't explain the situation. I told her that I was going away on business and asked her to take care of Jack while I was gone."

Warner sank back against the banister; his right hand found its way to the handle of his cane and gripped it tightly.

"What about you, Warner? I'm due up at your house with the room rent, and I'm afraid I won't be there when your landlord calls the roll."

"O, don't think of me—damn it—I need an airing, anyway," Warner answered gruffly, and he gave the rim of his hat a jerk that brought it down until it almost touched his nose.

"When am I going to see you, John?"

"I'll see you tonight."

"Where?"

"I'll meet you at the Seventy-second Street entrance of Central Park West."

"What time?"

"At seven o'clock."

Warner felt his way to the top step by running his hand along the edge of the banister.

"And we'll sit in the park and talk about Miss Kent."

"All right, Warner," and he patted him on the shoulder affectionately.

"When you came home and told me what a good time you had at that luncheon, I was as happy as if I had been there."

"You were happier, Warner."

"John, they will be giving you another some day, you see if they don't."

He stood on the top step and tried to push his feet down the old stairs for the last time, but they seemed to balk and felt as if they were glued in their tracks.

Weatherbee's face wrinkled into a sad grin as he watched him rest his elbow on the banister and lay his cheek in the palm of his hand and dream until he was awakened by Jack's playful voice at the bottom of the stairs.

"How do you do, Mr. Warner?" he yelled as he ran up the steps on his hands and feet.

"How do you do, sir? How are you today?"

"Pretty well, thank you. Stand there, Mr. Warner, and let me go between your legs," and he formed a bridge for Jack to go under.

"Have you a kiss for Uncle Warner?"

"You bet!" and he wrapped his little arms around Warner's neck and kissed him many times.

"And you are going to be a big, brave boy while your dad's away, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Just one more kiss," and the child kissed him several times.

"Good-bye—good-bye, John. Seven o'clock tonight," he called back in a broken tone from the floor below.

"At the Seventy-second Street entrance," Weatherbee yelled cheerfully.

Warner leaned his heavy figure against the wall when he reached the lower floor and dried his eyes with the ends of his fingers; then counted his steps to the corner. He ran the end of his cane along the edge of the curb and stood listening to the clanging of the ambulance bell.

"I wish I was in it," he thought to himself as he tapped his way to the middle of the street and an officer jerked him from in front of a street car and pushed him roughly to the opposite curb. He followed his cane to the Seventy-second Street entrance of Central Park and sank on a bench and listened patiently. He heard the puffing of the motor cars, the falling of the horse's iron shoes on the pavement. He heard the officer's surly voice yell, "keep to the right," but the children's playground at his

back was deserted. The nurses had watched the black clouds gathering and had taken the little ones home. The thunder mumbled a word of warning to the birds and they bent their heads and squatted under the leaves and waited for the rain, and Warner listened and sighed—and listened,—but his robin didn't sing.

CHAPTER XIV

JACK sat on the floor in the center of the room fussing with the back of his hand, and Weatherbee watched him for some time, then inquired playfully into the cause of the long silence.

"What are you doing?" he asked, as he looked down over the child's head.

"Look where the cat scratched me," he replied, holding his hand up above his curls.

"What were you doing to the cat?"

"Just playing with it."

"Weren't you squeezing its stomach to make it squeal?"

"I just squeezed it a little tiny bit."

"Don't pinch it, that will irritate it and make it sore."

"I'm squeezing it to make the blood come."

But the cat had only drawn his claw gently across the back of his little, soiled hand to frighten him and had left nothing but a red mark, though he squeezed and pinched it to

draw the blood which would enable him to heroically boast of a real wound.

Weatherbee spread an old newspaper on the table and tried hard for Jack's benefit to hum the child's favorite air of "There Was an Old Man and He Had a Wooden Leg," while he gathered up his little gingham dresses and what few pieces of clothing he had and placed them on the table.

"Are we going away, Dad?" he yelled in a tone of wild excitement as he jumped to his feet and ran to the table when he saw his father folding up his dress.

"Yes, we are going away."

"I know where—I know where," and he jumped up and down clapping his hands together.

"Where?" Weatherbee asked in a teasing, playful voice.

And Jack continued his clapping and jumping as he sang, "Camping—camping—camping."

"Some day," Weatherbee sang back between jumps, "but not today," and Jack's eyes opened wide as he ran to the edge of the table and asked, "Where are we going today, Dad?"

"You are going—Dad can't go. Dad has got to go away on business," and he studied the child's face carefully and he watched the expression of joy change to disappointment.

"Well, I don't want to go if you can't go, dad."

"But dad is going to take you there."

"And leave me?"

"Yes."

"Oh, dad."

"Oh, but you don't know where you are going. You will like this place."

"No, I won't."

"Yes, you will—you are going to Mrs. Turner's."

"Where are you going, dad?"

"I don't know—just yet."

"Will you be gone long?"

"Not very, I hope," and the humor of the remark afforded him a pleasant smile.

Jack turned his back and slowly drifted away from the table, nervously biting the nail of his thumb. His little head hung forward until his curls covered his cheeks.

The smile left Weatherbee's face and the

corners of his mouth twitched while he gazed at the little figure and wondered if it would stand up and face the separation bravely. He tried to think of some method he could use to keep him cheerful, but he could find no truthful one, and the few seconds of silence seemed like years to Weatherbee and he tried in vain to think of something pleasant to say.

Jack turned, placed his little hands behind his back and looked into his father's eyes reproachfully and spoke in a low, reprimanding tone. "Dad, are you going to camp out without me?"

He stood Jack on the table and squeezed his tiny hands sympathetically and studied the injured expression in the child's eyes.

"Do you think dad would go on a pleasure trip without you?"

"You always tell me every night in bed that you will never, never leave me."

"Don't ask dad why he doesn't take you. If it were possible to take you he would, but he can't, he just can't," and he unconsciously tightened his fingers around Jack's hands until he pulled them away with an "ouch."

"Will I have to stay at Mrs. Turner's all night?"

"Yes."

"Oh, dad, I don't want to go!" and he fell on Weatherbee's shoulder and wound his arms around his neck tightly.

"Stand up here," and Weatherbee stood him back on the table and unwound his arms from his neck. "Look at me," and he placed his finger under his chubby chin and pulled his little face up until their eyes met. "This isn't Jack Weatherbee the great big man I know, is it?"

"Ye-as it is!" he cried in a sobbing voice as he threw himself back on his father's shoulder, clinging to his neck and winding his legs around his waist.

Weatherbee leaned over and laid him on the table, removed his arms from about his neck, held his little hands tightly and looked down into his eyes, which were flooded with tears. "Well, then, brace up and be a big man, be a great big man and help dad—you want to help me, don't you?"

"Ye-as," he sobbed.

"I know you do and you are going to help him. Now, dad must go away for a few days—he doesn't want to go, but he must—he's got to go. It just breaks his heart to go, but he must go, he can't help it, and you are going to help him, you are going to be a great, big, brave man and help him; then when you get tall like me, I'll tell you what a brave little boy you were when you were small and how you went to Mrs. Turner's and stayed when dad had to go away on business, and then I'll tell you where I went and what I did and how I missed you, and how I would sit up nights and think of you and wish I had you in my arms, and you will tell me what you did while I was away and how you missed me and all about the people you met at Mrs. Turner's."

"And will you tell me all about the men you meet where you are going, and where you lived? Are you going to a hotel, dad?"

"I'll tell you all about it and all about the hotel where I lived, where I slept every night, whom I met, and we'll talk it all over and you'll be so happy and I'll be happy," and he raised

Jack to his feet, wrapped him in his arms and held him until Wartle's sarcastic voice was heard at the top of the stairs.

"This is the room, sir," he remarked in a loud tone, and he threw a warning glance at Weatherbee. "Three dollars ha week, hall furnished just has hit his."

The young man of foreign appearance glanced about the room quickly and inquired in a thick, German accent if he could move in this afternoon.

"Whenever you hare ready, sir," Wartle answered quickly, with his eyes still fastened on Weatherbee.

"All right, I get my thinks and moof in dis afternoon."

"You'll 'ave to get right hout, Mr. Weatherbee," he squeaked in a taunting tone as he started down the stairs.

"I'll get right out, Mr. Wartle," Weatherbee answered pleasantly.

"Dad, is that man going to have our room?"

"I guess so, but we—we don't care, do we?"

"Aren't we going to live here any more?"

"No—we are going to find a new place to live."

"When?"

"Just as soon as I get back."

"Are we going to leave our things here?"

"Yes, until I come back, and then we'll come and get them and move into our new home. Come here and let me wash those hands. Oh, such hands," and he held the little, soiled hands up before Jack's eyes and then kissed them tenderly.

"Stand there until dad gets the sponge."

"May I take my rocking-horse with me?"

"You don't want to take your rocking-horse over to Mrs. Turner's. Why, she wouldn't have room for it, her home is so crowded," and he rubbed the little hands playfully and bounded the sponge against his face, hoping he would forget the horse.

"Well, that man who moves in here will ride on it and break it."

"No, he won't; I'll ask him not to. Where is your hat?"

"There it is."

And Weatherbee tied the strings of the little,

torn straw hat under his chin and pulled the sleeves of his gingham dress down over his wrists.

"May I take mamma's picture with me?"

"You bet."

"And my story book?"

"Yes."

"And my jumping-jack?"

"You bet you!"

"Mr. Wartle calls me a jumping-jack, but I'm not, am I, dad?"

"No, sir; you're a little soldier!" and Weatherbee thought he was smiling with admiration as he stood back and looked at his little hero standing in the center of the table with his tiny figure patched in with awkward patches that he had sewn on himself, and his pride for the clumsy stitches he had taken made him forget the happy role he was playing and his eyes betrayed his forced smile.

"Dad, you're crying!"

"But you are not going to cry, are you—you are going to be brave—you are going to be a great big soldier—dad's soldier, and when dad takes you over to Mrs. Turner's and leaves you,

you are not going to cry, and at night when you go to bed, you are not going to forget your prayers, and you're going to pray for dad, and wherever dad is—no matter where he is, or how lonely he is—he'll pray for you and ask God to make you that big, strong, honest boy—that big soldier—that loving soldier that you are—that you have always been—that you're always going to be, aren't you?" and he clutched the child in his arms and held him until he gasped for breath—pushed his head back, held Weatherbee's face between his little hands and looked into his eyes reproachfully.

"Dad, you're crying now," and he shook his small, white finger in his face until it touched his nose.

"Yes, dad is an old baby, isn't he? But you are not going to cry, are you? And if you get lonely, just think hard and say to yourself that you know, that you are certain dad is thinking of you."

"And if it thunders, I'll just get under the bed clothes and won't be a bit afraid."

"That's right, and if it thunders I'll think of you and take you in my arms and hold you

tight, and you just make believe that you are in dad's arms and that you hear him say, 'don't be afraid,' and he'll be saying it to you no matter where he is, no matter where. Will you try?"

"Yes."

"You know dad hasn't anyone else on earth to think of but you, and you haven't anyone but me."

"Shall I pray for Mr. Warner?"

"Yes, ask God to make his eyes well so he can see. Will you remember?"

"Yes."

Weatherbee placed his hands on the child's shoulders, looked into his big, brave eyes, drew him to his breast, then folded him in his arms and from between his clinched teeth whispered, "good-bye," until the whisper faded into a sob.

"Come on, now," and he jumped him to the floor, "get your jumping-jack and your story book."

And Jack placed the torn story book under his arm and tucked the crippled jumping-jack into the small pocket of his dress. "And I am going to take mamma's picture," he said as he

removed it from the table and studied it thoughtfully.

Weatherbee enrolled the child's few pieces of wearing apparel in the newspaper, placed a lead pencil and a few sheets of memorandum in his pocket, took several manuscripts that were lying on the table and threw them on a shelf in the closet.

"Are you going to take my picture, dad?"

"You bet I am, I have it in my pocket," and he glanced about the room quickly, to see if there was any favorite trinket small enough to carry in his pocket, but there was nothing. The tables and walls were bare.

"Are you ready?" he asked in a playful voice as he pushed the newspaper bundle under his arm.

"Yep," was Jack's cheerful answer. "It's raining, dad, and we haven't any umbrella, have we?"

"No, we don't mind the rain," and they started hand in hand while the cool, damp breeze sent the faded window curtains to and fro as if to wave their companions a "good luck and good-bye."

CHAPTER XV

THE distance to the banisters from the old wooden table which Weatherbee had bent over so many, many long, weary nights struggling with his books, seemed long. His feet felt heavy—they seemed to stick to the old ragged carpet as if they were hugging each spot they touched for the last time. His heart, which was hidden behind a false smile, ached; it throbbed and jumped and jerked as he thought of the little hand he was holding.

He peeked from the corners of his eyes at the old bed-couch where he had lain for the last time with those tiny arms clasped around his neck, explaining away the imaginary riddles of babyhood, and he wondered how long it would be before those little arms would wind themselves around his neck again and when the sleepy voice would whisper some puzzling question into his ear that would force him to rise and light his pipe, while he searched for an answer.

“I can’t call at Mrs. Turner’s to see him,” he

thought to himself, "for I told her I was leaving town on business and asked her to take care of him until I returned."

Jack was well acquainted with his pensive moods and stood patiently watching him while he stood in the center of the room, buried in thought, with his head hanging low and his eyes closed.

The stairs creaked, but he didn't hear them, though Jack listened silently and watched eagerly for the approaching figure, and his eyes glared at the face before him, his forehead wrinkled, his lips separated, and he stood speechless in a state of frightened amazement, and studied the familiar features and the large, soft eyes that were looking into his. He centered his gaze on her eyes and he didn't see the beautiful, white, soft gown that clung to her slender figure, the white gloves that covered her shapely hands, or the large, simple hat of the same color. His eyes never left her eyes—he riveted his unnatural stare on the eyes that might have been moulded from the ones in the picture he held under his arm.

As Rosamond Kent stood smiling affection-

ately at the little bundle of blue gingham patches, with her hand resting gracefully on the banister, she resembled a painting that might have been returned from an exhibition with the gold prize. She watched the two characters standing in the center of the room for many seconds, one glaring at her as if she had fallen out of a peaceful sky and the other with his eyes closed, dreaming, as she supposed, of a book or poem, and she broke the silence with a gentle "good-afternoon."

The words came to Weatherbee's ears like music that had floated over the sea of memory, and he felt as if he had been transferred from the dream of the bed-couch with Jack's arms clinging about his neck to the dream of a voice he had heard and never expected to hear again. He realized he was standing in the room that he must leave, and he hated to open his eyes and gaze at its walls again for the last time. He raised his lids slowly and staggered back when he saw Miss Kent standing before him, and his tongue seemed to stick to his teeth when he tried to speak.

"Go-od af-ter-noon," he mumbled after a

desperate struggle. "This is an unexpected pleasure."

"The old gentleman at the door told me to come right up. If you are going out, Mr. Weatherbee, please don't let me detain you. I can call again."

"Well, we are going out," and he smiled faintly as he glanced down at Jack, "but we have no particular anxiety to hurry."

"What a sweet child," Miss Kent remarked tenderly advancing a step toward Jack. "How do you do, sir?" and she offered him her hand and he placed his toys on the floor and presented one hand while he pulled his little hat off with the other, though his eyes never wandered from hers.

"This is little Jack," Weatherbee said in a proud tone, and he placed his hand on the child's head and shook it affectionately.

"Well, I am pleased to meet you," and she shook his little hand firmly.

"You look like my mamma's picture," he whispered as he drew his hand away slowly and watched her eyes steadily.

"Is that so? Well, that pleases me very much."

Weatherbee stood wondering if he had the right or the authority to ask his guest to be seated, and he faced the situation humorously and hoped that fate might delay his German friend who had gone for his belongings. "I hope he loses something and has to hunt an hour or so for it," he thought to himself and decided to take a chance, so he politely requested Miss Kent to be seated.

"Mr. Weatherbee," she replied seriously, "I have come on a matter of great importance to me, and if you can spare me a few moments, I'll try and be as brief as possible."

Weatherbee's smile broadened and he answered quietly, "All the time I have at my disposal, Miss Kent, is yours," and he whispered in Jack's ear to wait down-stairs and he hurried away and sat on the bottom step studying his mother's picture.

Weatherbee stood before Miss Kent and remarked politely, "I am at your service." He struggled to appear at ease, though he was unable to refrain from listening for the approach of his German friend.

"Mr. Weatherbee, did the lady we were speaking of die in this house?"

Weatherbee nodded his head and whispered, "Yes."

"How long ago?"

"Over two years ago."

"Were any of her friends with her when she died?"

"Only one."

"A lady or a gentleman?"

"A gentleman."

"Do you know how she was situated financially?"

"Her friend cared for her during her illness."

"Did he bury her?"

"As best he could."

"Do you know where I can find him?"

"I am he," Weatherbee replied slowly and quietly after a short silence, and another long silence followed while she stood and gazed at him with an admiration that made her fight with her white gloved arms to keep them from winding themselves around his neck. She searched for words that would express her gratitude, but any she found seemed empty and hollow, and she shook her head slowly and whispered, "How noble of you, how noble of you."

"I wish I had been able to have done more," he whispered back and watched the tears gathering around her large, soft eyes.

"Would it be asking too much of you to take me to her grave?"

"If you care to walk with me, I shall be proud to take you there."

"I shall be proud to walk with you and I am proud to know you," and she went to him and gripped his hand firmly and looked upon his shiny, worn blue serge suit as a flag of honor.

Weatherbee bowed low with gratitude and was repeating the words, "I am grateful," for the second time as the long-haired German youth, who had rented the room, appeared at the top of the stairs with his telescope.

"May I huff the room now?" he inquired politely.

"Certainly, certainly," Weatherbee answered quickly, and he assumed an air of welcome and a rapidity of speech that made it impossible for the youth to reply or reveal the true situation.

"I didn't expect you so soon. You may have the room—say—in fifteen minutes. Would it

be asking too much of you to allow me fifteen minutes? I wish to pick up one or two little things—and if you will come back in fifteen minutes—it will be just fifteen minutes—of course if you remain, why, you can't come back—but I'd love to have you come back."

"Certainly, certainly," the youth interrupted, "I'll leave my things here."

"By all means leave your things here," and Weatherbee removed the large telescope from his hand and he continued talking and gently patted him on the shoulder, urging him toward the stairs—"but you'll come back, won't you? Thank you very much," he yelled at the youth whom he had on his way down the stairs.

"Pardon me, but that is the gentleman who is going to use my studio while I am away," and he transferred the heavy telescope from one hand to the other, forgetting in his embarrassed excitement that there was such a place as the floor to set it on.

"Are you going to remain out of town long?" Rosamond asked as she watched him shift the bag again.

"I haven't decided yet just how long I will

be gone—it depends. I'll be right here in the city for a week or so. What day would you like to visit your friend's grave?" he asked seriously, holding the bag in both hands.

"Will you be free Monday?"

"I—I hope so—at what time?"

"I would like to go in the morning—I would like to take some flowers. I suppose the grave is in bad condition?"

"There are no flowers there, but otherwise the grave is in good condition."

"You have been there?"

"I was there last Sunday."

She made another search for words to express her gratitude, but failed to find any that would even suggest one of the numberless heart-throbs his noble character had given her. They were heart-throbs of love, though she was unconscious of it, for the love-throbs were beating behind a heavy veil of gratitude. She closed her eyes and gripped each hand in the other and spoke in a low whisper, emphasizing each word with a nod of her head. "O Mr. Weatherbee, I am so grateful to you."

As Weatherbee stood in total ignorance of

the heavy telescope which he was hanging on to with both hands and leaning back with it against his knees, he suggested a comic picture until one saw the serious, sympathetic expression of his face and heard the deep, gentle, sincere love quiver in his voice.

"Miss Kent, I am the most grateful man in the world. Oh, if I could only find words that would explain how proud I was when I first saw you and heard you read the poem I had written—that I had even thought of," and he accentuated each word with an unconscious pull at the telescope until he had drawn it far above his knees. He was not aware that his voice had fallen to an emotional whisper, until he saw Rosamond's embarrassed gaze sink to the rag carpet. She lowered her head until her face was hidden behind the broad white rim of her hat and drifted slowly to the stairs.

His mind travelled back over what he had said—the weight of the telescope fell to one hand and swung to his side, his thin, white fingers wandered through his hair and he tried to continue, but she interrupted by laughing enthusiastically and exclaiming, "Oh!" as she

clasped her hands together when she saw Jack busily engaged on the bottom step with one of his toys. "Why, here is this little dear sitting on the step. Has he been sitting here all the time?"

"I think so," Weatherbee answered as he hurried to the banister. "Come here, Jack," and he ran up the stairs as he informed them that he had been playing with his jumping-jack and looking at his mamma's picture.

Rosamond stooped and met him at the top step with open arms. "Bless his heart—is this your jumping-jack?" and she worked the crippled toy and watched its antics.

"Yes, and this is my story-book," and he turned the torn leaves over to show her the pictures. "And—and this is my mamma's picture," and he held the photograph before her and watched her eyes swell as they stared at the face of her sister and travel in blank amazement from it to Weatherbee, and from Weatherbee back to the dead mother whose child stood smiling before her. Her eyes closed, her lips trembled and her face turned deathly pale. She pressed her hands over her eyes and held

them there for a moment, then glanced at Jack and folded him in her arms and sobbed hysterically—"O Mr. Weatherbee, is this true?" and he nodded his head slowly and watched her clutch the child tighter in her arms and press her lips to his cheek.

Weatherbee wound his fingers around the handle of the bulgy telescope. The situation crept through his mind slowly, and he felt as if he were being wrapped in a cold, wet blanket. He saw the tiny thing that he had tied up in his soul in hard, square knots, entering the heart of a blood relation—one who was nearer and who had a greater right to love it than he had and a feeling of jealousy shot through his veins. He clenched his teeth and his body shook with fear when he thought of Jack passing out of his life. He saw the child in the Kent mansion dressed in costly dresses and he pictured himself on a lonely cot, and he whispered to himself, "I'm a coward, I'm a selfish coward."

Rosamond held Jack by the shoulder, pushed him back slowly, gazed into his eyes tenderly and ran her fingers through his curls. "Oh,

my dear, are you going away with your papa?"

"Yes, he is going to leave me at Mrs. Turner's until he comes back."

"Oh, no—no—no—you must come and live with me at my house, mustn't he, Mr. Weatherbee?" and she watched Weatherbee's eyes close and his lips twitch and she waited for his reply, but he didn't answer.

"O Mr. Weatherbee, you couldn't refuse!"

"No—no," he sighed, "I mustn't refuse," and in her nervous excitement Rosamond took Jack in her arms and carried him to the stairs.

"You'll see your papa Monday when he calls," and she paused on the top step while Jack waved the broken jumping-jack at his father, who was throwing a farewell kiss with his trembling hand and trying to speak with a voice that was sticking in his throat. "I'll see you Monday, Jack."

"Come, dear, we'll get in the automobile and make the driver drive as fast as he can," and she hurried down the creaking stairs, while Jack yelled back at the top of his voice, "O dad, we are going to ride in an anti-mo-bile!" and Jack's curls floated in the damp breeze as the massive car whirled up Fifth Avenue.

CHAPTER XVI

WEATHERBEE hung far over the banisters and watched Miss Kent hurrying down the stairs with Jack. His long arm went down as far as he could reach with the last kiss he threw to the child; while he watched them turn down the dark hall, he pulled the telescope up, set it on the banister, placed his elbows on it and rested his face in his hands. The quiet of the room seemed restful. He often sat and listened to the song of silence, but it had never seemed as friendly—it sounded as if it were trying to hum a more encouraging air than it had ever tried to sing to him before and he listened quietly for many moments.

He raised his head slowly and sat the telescope on the floor, strolled leisurely to the little window and drew back the soiled curtain. The dark clouds had turned to a clear, bright blue. The sun peeped in through the small window, rested on his pale cheek and he welcomed it with a faint smile of gratitude. The curtain fell from his fingers, his hands wandered into

the pockets of his trousers, and he stood at the table and smiled down at the clumsy little bundle he had made of Jack's belongings. He untied the string, removed the newspaper, held the little blue gingham dress up and grinned at the awkward, square patches that he had placed there himself. His mind shot up Fifth Avenue into the Kent mansion, and he wondered if he would ever see those patches hanging on Jack's tiny form again. He folded the dress carefully, wrapped it in the newspaper, tied it tightly, tucked it under his arm and paused as he thought to himself, "I can at least remain until my German friend returns," and he sat in the broken rocker with the bundle in his lap, rocked peacefully while he pictured Jack being prepared for his first dinner on Fifth Avenue and wondered if he would enjoy it as much as the many he had cooked for him on the oil stove.

He pushed the little rocker back and forth swiftly, threw his head back and laughed aloud as he thought of some of the questions Jack might ask when he sat at the table and saw the many servants bobbing about him.

"How I would love to conceal myself in some corner and not let him know I was there and watch his eyes and listen to his remarks," Weatherbee thought to himself while he swung to and fro in the little chair that seemed to squeak forth with enthusiasm and rejoice in his happy thoughts.

The stream of sunlight that had been stealing its way through the little window had broadened and crawled along on the rag carpet and was flickering and dancing before him as if it knew his mind and wanted to waltz in unison with his heart, which was beating with joy over the story it had to tell Warner while they sat on the bench in the park that night and gazed up through the trees at the moon.

He had completely forgotten himself and his own situation. He smiled at the moment of jealousy he had passed through when he saw Miss Kent seize Jack and hold him in her arms. His jealousy simmered into gratitude as he looked at Jack's future path in life, the path he had studied and worried over so many nights, the path that fate had changed from one of cobble stones to one of roses.

His mind felt as if it were hanging on a pendulum, for it swung back and forth over the situation from the time he first saw Jack sitting on the floor at his mother's bedside, playing with a rubber toy, until Miss Kent hurried down the stairs with him clutched in her arms. He thought of the something that kept slapping him on the back and pushing him toward the Kent mansion when he fought with himself and tried not to go. With closed eyes he glanced at his embarrassment in Kent's presence and was grateful for it.

"How small and yet how big the world is," he thought as he pictured the few short blocks which had hidden the soul that flickered out of the hall bedroom on Twenty-ninth Street from one in the mansion on Fifth Avenue, not twenty blocks away.

"It's a good old world, though, if you humor it a little," he whispered aloud and his eyes fell on the manuscripts he had thrown on the shelf in the closet and he walked over and pulled them down and glanced over the pages and pushed them under the string that was tied around Jack's bundle. "The poor

'scripts aren't to blame," he thought to himself, "and they may keep me company under some lonesome old tree."

He wrote his German friend a note thanking him for remaining away so long and nailed it to the center of the table with a pin so he would be sure to see it. He pushed Jack's bundle and his 'scripts under his arm and started on his aimless journey, but the old stairs creaked before he reached them and announced a new arrival.

"It's the German youth," he said to himself, as he took the note and tore it in bits and turned to express his thanks, and his eyes fell on the small, thin figure of Mr. Grant, the publisher. His forehead knitted itself into a mass of puzzled wrinkles when he saw the man standing before him that he had tried in vain to see so many times. He thought of the one abrupt interview the little man had given him after he had called at his office every morning for a few weeks. He remembered his snappy, hopeless tones, and how he dismissed him without asking him to be seated. He remembered the clean-shaven face with the thin lips

that hung over the long protruding teeth and the small grey eyes that shot from his head to his shoes and back to the pages of a book they had left for less than a second and didn't leave again during the conversation that lasted perhaps seconds. It was Weatherbee's last visit to a publisher's office—the visit that had humiliated him more than any he had ever experienced. Grant was the man who had ignored his presence after he had given him one piercing glance, the man who blocked his conversation by snapping, "I'm busy now," each time he attempted to speak, but there he stood smiling pleasantly.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Weatherbee," and he jerked the words out of his mouth as quickly as he did when he sat in his office chair, though his voice didn't possess the annoyed tone it did then.

"How do you do, Mr. Grant? This is something new for the publisher to call on the author, isn't it?"

"No, the publisher is glad to call on the author if he is writing anything worth while."

"Well, I hope I have written something of that kind."

"You have. I read one of your 'scripts yesterday and took the other home and read it last night. Sorry I didn't get to them sooner, but you know the works of an unknown author are usually left until everything else is read."

"Yes, I have known that for some time," Weatherbee answered in a low, dry tone, though he wasn't sure whether Mr. Grant meant his remarks to be funny or otherwise.

"I am leaving town this evening for three or four weeks, and I wanted to see you first. If you haven't disposed of your books and wish to do business with us, we would like to publish them this fall."

After Weatherbee had swallowed a few times and searched around and found his voice, he informed Mr. Grant that he would be glad to do business with his firm.

Grant's eyes shot around the attic room and gathered in Weatherbee's situation with a glance, but his cold, snappy personality misrepresented his character. His sharp business instinct told him at once that he was in the presence of a man who was in need of money, but he was not a man who would take an unfair

advantage of a business opportunity and his innate generosity which was hidden behind his snappy, icy manner, was favorably touched by Weatherbee's humorous frankness.

"Very well, glance at that," he said in his usual jerky way, as he drew a contract from his coat pocket quickly, and gave it to Weatherbee. "You'll find the regular percentage there. We don't usually give it to an unknown author, but I like your work. That contract gives us an option on anything you write for the next ten years—two hundred and fifty dollars down on each of these books and five hundred on each one we accept hereafter. If that is satisfactory, you may sign this one, I have signed that one."

He smiled when he watched Weatherbee's hands tremble as he held the contract before his closed eyes and listened to the words which were uttered in a stuttering whisper, "That is quite satisfactory to me, Mr. Grant."

"Just sign it here," he remarked in a quiet tone of amusement, holding his thumb on the spot as he placed the contract on the table and gave Weatherbee his fountain pen, and Weath-

erbee scribbled his name on the sheet of paper, while Grant grabbed a chair and seated himself at the opposite side of the table, drew his check-book from his hip pocket, removed his pen from between Weatherbee's fingers and asked quickly, "You spell your name W-e-a-t-h-e-r-b-e-e—don't you?"

"Yes, John Weatherbee," he stammered, and Grant drew the check, passed it and a slip of paper across the table and placed the pen in Weatherbee's fingers.

"Just sign that receipt, will you?" and while Weatherbee tried to scratch his name on the paper, Grant held the check square before him and read it aloud quickly. "'Pay to the order of John Weatherbee, five hundred dollars, H. B. Grant & Company.' I guess you'll find that all right," and he gave Weatherbee an affectionate crack on the back, as he continued, "And if I'm not greatly mistaken those two books will bring you in a great many of those checks. I hope so. Make yourself at home in our office, Mr. Weatherbee. Keep working, young man, you're the coming American author—good day," and his short, thin legs car-

ried his small body away in the same jerky manner in which his tongue disposed of his conversation. He felt that he was conscious of Weatherbee's circumstances from the moment he had entered the room and he glanced over his shoulder as he started down the stairs and smiled at Weatherbee's dazed condition caused by the five hundred dollar check.

Weatherbee's hand shook as he held the check close to his eyes and read it over carefully. He placed it on the table and looked around the room to see if he was alone and then held it still closer to his eyes and read it over several times. He studied the date, the signature, the amount and placed it on the table, crowded his hands deep into the pockets of his trousers, tilted back in his chair and gazed at it as if he expected it to bite him if he touched it again. He stood his elbows on the table and rested his head in his hand and looked down at it as if he were gazing into a bottomless well, and read it over again and again.

The German youth entered the room, spoke and coughed several times, but wasn't heard



"Weatherbee's hand shook as he held the check close to his eyes and read it carefully"

until he stepped to Weatherbee's side and touched him on the shoulder gently.

After Weatherbee had looked him over with a vacant stare for several seconds, he gathered words enough together to thank him for giving him the use of the room as long as he had, and learned, after polite inquiry, that the German didn't object to taking a room on the floor below if he didn't have to pay more than one dollar and fifty cents a week for it.

Weatherbee explained that owing to an unexpected change in his business arrangements, he was going to remain in the city and would like to keep his room. "I shall see that you get a more pleasant room than this one and will willingly pay the difference in rent while you are here. Will you make yourself at home while I see Mr. Wartle and have him assign you to the room?"

Weatherbee found Wartle and Mrs. Murray seated in the kitchen going over the details of their approaching wedding. Wartle not only ignored the check, but laughed at it and said, "Hit his ha bunkho."

Mrs. Murray examined it and said, "It's

genuine," and the groom was ordered to advance "Witherbee" what money he wanted and to stop "chewin' the rag about it."

The German youth moved his large telescope into the front room on the floor below and Weatherbee started for Mrs. Turner's to explain Jack's absence with twenty dollars in his pocket, while Mrs. Murray and Wartle sat examining the check.

When Weatherbee reached Warner's house he was notified that he hadn't been there since noon and he paid the rent for Warner's room and started for the park. He found Warner seated on the bench they called "theirs." His slouch hat was crumpled in his left hand, his cane stood between his knees and his right hand rested on its handle. His head hung low and his white hair looked as if it had been pushed in every direction by nervous fingers.

Weatherbee stood at a distance of twenty feet and studied the picture for many minutes. His heart beat with enthusiasm and admiration for the man who sat bowed in grief waiting for his coming. His robin was chirping above his head, but he didn't seem to hear it.



"He found Warner seated on the bench they called theirs. His slouch hat was crumpled in his left hand, his cane stood between his knees and his right hand rested on its handle. His head hung low and his white hair looked as if it had been pushed in every direction by nervous fingers"

Weatherbee sauntered up to his side and struck him a savage whack on the shoulder that knocked his cane and hat from his hand.

"Well, we are here, Warner!" he exclaimed in a good-natured tone, that Warner thought was cleverly forced.

"Yes, John, I have been waiting for you."

"How long have you been sitting here, Warner?"

"I don't know, John."

"Did you sit here while it was raining?"

"I don't know, John, I guess so."

"Why, you're soaked, Warner."

"It feels good, John, it feels good. It's cool."

"Let us walk, Warner—I—I can't sit still, I'm nervous," and they started across Seventy-second Street toward Broadway.

Warner clung to Weatherbee's arm and dragged his feet along slowly. He didn't ask where they were going, for he didn't care and the most welcome spot he could think of was the river.

Weatherbee's long silence was not intentional. He had a long pleasant story to tell and he didn't know just how to tell it, or where

to begin. He had rushed to Mrs. Turner's, then to Warner's house and from there to the Park so hurriedly that he had not quite regained his breath, but he was collecting his thoughts slowly and preparing to bombard Warner with the good news.

"Come in here," he said quietly, as he pulled Warner into a large Broadway restaurant and relieved him of his hat and cane and seated him at a table spread with fresh, white linen.

"We are going from soup to nuts, Warner, and from there to pure Havana tobacco," and Weatherbee quietly passed the long pleasant story across the table and watched Warner pick the tears from his smiling eyes with the corner of his serviette. Weatherbee begged him to talk, but it was useless. His tongue was numb with happiness, there were no words to express or describe his feeling and he sighed and pulled away at his long, black cigar in silence. Weatherbee led him to his hall bedroom and he whispered, "Good-night, John," many times before he released his hand and he sat on the edge of his cot and dreamed over the story long after Weatherbee had gone.



*"And he filled his pipe, drew a chair up to the window, placed
his arms on the sill, smiled up at the moon and smoked"*

A large box of smoking tobacco was purchased in the little cigar store on Twenty-ninth Street. The moon was peeping in through the little attic window to welcome Weatherbee when he entered, and he filled his pipe, drew a chair up to the window, placed his arms on its sill, smiled up at the moon and smoked.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN the automobile came to a stop in front of the Kent mansion, Rosamond alighted quickly, but Jack made no attempt to move. He sat staring at the large windows and the white marble steps.

"Oh, are we there already?" he inquired in a tone that explained his desire to remain in the car as he sat quietly and watched Rosamond standing with both hands stretched forward to jump him to the walk.

"Yes, we are home—your home," she answered tenderly and she took him in her arms and carried him to the top step, but his entrance into the mansion was made backwards for his eyes never left the automobile until the heavy door swung and hid it from his wondering gaze.

He mentally photographed the butler's uniform with one glance and a pleasant smile, then remarked in a most complimentary manner, "you look just like a man in my picture book," but the gentleman who represented the cut in

the picture book, printed for the purpose of pleasing babies, did not think the compliment called for any word of thanks and he made no reply, though Rosamond squeezed his little hand affectionately and concealed a smile with her white glove as she led him into the drawing room.

His eyes wandered from one large oil painting to another and his voice fell to a surprised whisper. "Oh, this is just like the Art Museum, isn't it?" and he threw his hands behind his back and clutched them tightly as he stood in the center of the large room and began to count the sheep on one of the canvasses.

Rosamond watched the little red lips move silently until they exclaimed:—"There are sixty-three in that one, aren't there?"

"I have never counted them. You come up to my room and I'll explain all these paintings to you tomorrow."

When they reached the foot of the wide stairs Rosamond attempted to take Jack in her arms, but he politely protested.

"You mustn't carry me, because I'm too heavy."

"What makes you think you are too heavy?"

"Because when you lift me your face gets red."

So they climbed the stairs hand in hand and Jack playfully pounded his little feet on the heavily carpeted steps and stopped when he had gone half way and jumped up and down several times, then exclaimed in a hopeless, breathless tone, "you can't make these big stairs squeak, can you?"

"Do you like to hear the steps squeak?"

"Yes, Dad says our stairs can talk—and they just yell when Mr. Wartle gets on them."

"Don't you like these stairs?"

"Yes, pretty well, they look nice, but they won't squeak, I like squeaky stairs."

Rosamond threw the door of her sleeping room open and Jack entered by sliding his feet along the heavy rug.

"This is my room."

After his eyes had travelled around the four walls several times, he inquired in a tone of utter amazement, "Do you sleep in this big room all alone?"

"Yes, and I'm going to get a bed to match mine and have it put in here for you."

"Will there be a tent over it like yours?"

"Yes, just like mine. Will you like that?"

"Yes, is that to keep the mosquitoes out?"

"No, that is to keep the light out. There are no mosquitoes up here."

He slid his way to one of the large windows, pulled the curtain aside and stepped back with surprise.

"Oh, you can see right out onto the street, can't you? And there is the man who brought us up here in his automobile. I guess he is waiting for his pay."

Rosamond tried to watch the child gazing down at the long line of automobiles crowding their way in both directions, but she was unable to control her love and she took him in her arms, placed him among the silk-covered pillows on the large divan and kissed him until he gasped for breath.

"How would you like some nice cake and a glass of milk or nice ice-cold lemonade before dinner?"

Jack didn't keep her waiting long for a reply, and it took her some time to explain the mechanism of the electric button she pressed to summon the servant.

"But I can't hear it ring," and he became more puzzled as he pressed each one of the five buttons several times, but he was finally convinced that they made a noise some place when he saw five servants standing at the door awaiting orders.

Rosamond selected two of her choice silk pillows from the divan, placed them in a large armchair and seated Jack at a small mahogany table before the window. She drew the curtains aside so he could watch the automobiles pass and he was served with several portions of chocolate cake and a silver pitcher of lemonade. She instructed her maid to care for his wants and with a number of affectionate kisses, asked to be excused for just a few minutes.

Jack granted her request politely and also informed her as she was hurrying from the room that the automobile man was waiting there yet for his pay.

There were very few crumbs of chocolate left on the large silver cake dish when Jack leaned back in his chair and began counting the automobiles passing on the crowded street below. He counted until the large blue eyes

became drowsy and closed. The automobiles, the silver cake dish, the electric buttons and the noise and mad rush on Fifth Avenue were forgotten, for the baby mind dreamed itself back into Weatherbee's arms on the little cot in the attic on Twenty-ninth Street.

Rosamond unfolded the strange story to her mother and Helen, and all three agreed that Mr. Kent shouldn't be informed until the proper opportunity presented itself, and after a careful plan had been arranged to conceal the child's identity, they went to Rosamond's room, dismissed the maid and studied the sleeping picture carefully for many minutes.

Jack awoke to find himself wrapped in Mrs. Kent's arms and her cheek pressed to his. He grunted and struggled until he succeeded in gaining his freedom and backed his way to the center of the room, gazing with a quizzical eye at Mrs. Kent, whose faint smile was liberally moistened with tears.

Helen informed him that he hadn't kissed her yet and then took possession of him after a playful struggle and kissed him affectionately many times.

Jack blushed and laughed heartily, for he considered it all a huge joke and glanced from one to the other as if he were wondering what was going to happen next. After a long silence, he took Mrs. Kent's hand in both of his, looked up into her eyes and whispered, "Why are you crying?" and she answered with a deep sob and more tears as she gathered him in her arms.

Dinner was announced and Rosamond took personal charge of the little soiled hands and the curls which were somewhat tangled, owing to the manner in which he had been passed from one to the other since his arrival at the Kent mansion. The curls were gently straightened and the little hands washed in a lather of perfumed soap that kept either one hand or the other constantly at Jack's nose.

"Isn't that nice smelly soap?"

"Do you like it?"

"Yes, I never smelled such lovely soap before."

The curls were sprinkled with rich toilet water and the patches on the gingham dress were scented with French perfume. She held

the little white face between her hands and kissed the large blue eyes again and again.

She was even better acquainted with her father's strong, stubborn mind than her mother and she feared his attitude toward the child, so she planned a harmless little scheme that would keep Jack's real name a secret until they became acquainted and would not cause the child to tell a falsehood.

"Why do you look at me so?" he asked in a puzzled tone, as he stood with his hands at his side allowing Rosamond to squeeze his cheeks tightly. "Are you worried about something?"

"No, I am happy—awfully, awfully happy!"

"Why do you frown so, then?"

"Because I am so happy."

"People don't frown when they are happy, do they?"

"I do sometimes when I am very, very happy," and she squeezed the cheeks tighter and shook the little head until the curls swung about his face.

"Do you like my sister?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Do you like my mother?"

"Yes, very much."

"You are going to meet my father at dinner tonight, and I want you to like him too. He doesn't talk very much and when he does talk, he speaks quickly and he has a deep heavy voice and he jerks his words out as if he was angry about something, but he isn't, that is only his way, so don't you be afraid, will you?"

"No—Dad says big souls always have big voices. Mr. Warner has a big voice."

"My father has a big soul, but he doesn't know it—he keeps it locked up in his business, and we are going to make him unlock it. You and my mother and sister and I are going to play a little joke on him."

"Won't he be angry?"

"No, because he won't know anything about it. Even when it is all over he won't know it was a joke, so you see he can't get angry, can he?"

"No, I don't see how he can—if he doesn't find it out. What is it?"

"Well, we are going to introduce you to him as 'Little Jack,' just 'Little Jack'—no more, and he may not ask what your last name is, but if he does, why, you just say 'Jack' and then

when you get quite well acquainted we'll tell him your last name. Don't you think that will be a good joke?"

"Yes, but if he asks me right away what my last name is, what shall I say then?"

"Just say, 'Jack.' "

"But he may say 'Jack, what?' "

"Then you may say, 'I guess that is all.' Be sure and say 'I guess,' won't you?"

Jack repeated the words, "I guess that is all," aloud until he reached the dining room, but the old colored waiter's large white eyes stared them out of his memory, and he didn't hesitate to remind him that he also looked like a man in his picture book.

Kent's approach was announced by the clearing of his throat as he left the library and a hush fell over the dining room and Jack muffled his laugh by placing his hand over his mouth and whispering between his fingers, "Is this he?"

Rosamond nodded her head and Jack's hands fell to his side. He stood erect, smiled playfully, and repeated the words to himself, "I guess that is all." The man of whom the

three ladies stood in dread meant nothing to Jack but a huge joke. The large table, which was thickly spread with silverware, the handsomely decorated room and the many servants were not even noticed by the child. His mind was riveted on the joke he was to take part in, and the joke robbed the costly surroundings of any attention.

He waited for his victim calmly and, when Rosamond introduced him to her father, he courtesied, stepped forward, quickly offered his hand and spoke in a firm voice.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Kent."

Kent held his hand while he studied the quaint little picture. His eyes travelled quickly from the curls to the eyes and to the patched dress and back to the eyes that were dancing with merriment. He released the little hand and Rosamond seated him in the high chair at her right, which placed him at Kent's left.

The dinner progressed in silence for some time, while all ears were anxiously waiting for Kent's first question. He was not aware that his quizzical glances at the child's features were being carefully watched by his family.

He leaned back in his chair and the quizzical glance melted into a sympathetic stare. The cigar that he always puffed at between courses was forgotten, and each course was served and removed unnoticed. He studied Jack's perfect table manners carefully, and the easy, graceful way in which he conducted himself astonished him.

Jack ate heartily and the smile never left his face, for he waited with much amusement for his cue, and several times he was heard whispering to himself, "I guess that is all."

"You don't eat very much, do you?" he remarked kindly to Kent and finished by unconsciously saying aloud, "I guess that is all."

"No," Kent replied pleasantly, "it seems to satisfy my appetite to watch you—you seem to be doing most of the work here this evening. No one appears to be very hungry but you, so you just go right ahead. Better bring some more ice cream, Sam'l, he will scrape the flowers off that dish if you don't."

Jack was served with another large portion of ice cream. Kent lighted his cigar, sipped his coffee and laughed heartily when Jack grunted that he just couldn't eat any more.

"From all appearances you are going to keep the 'Ten Club' busy cooking, aren't you?"

"What is the 'Ten Club?' " Jack asked, finishing his remark with, "I guess that is all."

"Hasn't Miss Kent told you what the 'Ten Club' is?"

"I don't think so."

"Well, you come in the library and I'll tell you what it is and you can tell me who you are and all about yourself," and he jumped him from the high chair and led him to the library and Jack looked back at Rosamond with a smile of assurance and whispered, "I guess that is all."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE picture of Kent jumping the child to the floor and sauntering into the library swinging his little hand playfully, so surprised the ladies that they rose to their feet simultaneously. After a few astonished glances had been exchanged, a short conversation was held in a low whisper and it was decided that the little stranger and Mr. Kent be left entirely alone until they became better acquainted, so Mrs. Kent and Helen retired to Rosamond's room and left her to watch the development of the new acquaintance which had progressed so favorably, though all three were waiting with much anxiety and no little fear for the moment to come when Kent would discover who Jack was. Rosamond remained near the open door of the library, but she was not seen by the father or the child.

"I call this my home office," Kent said in a heavy, mellow voice, as he paused in the center of the room still clinging to the child's hand.

Jack surveyed with one quick glance the

four walls, ceiling, floor, the massive furniture and the many books, then ran to the window, pulled the curtain aside and yelled, "oh, what a pretty glass house and what beautiful flowers!"

The sight of the large conservatory and the many gorgeous plants aroused his enthusiasm and drew his face so close to the window that his little nose was pressed flat against the glass.

Kent followed him to the window and meant to pat the child affectionately, but he pressed his heavy hand on his little head and squeezed it with his fingers until he yelled "ouch," and drew away.

"Oh, did I hurt you? I didn't mean to," he said in a heavy tone, which had a sincere apologetic ring to it; but Jack soon forgot the pinch and his little face was again pressed against the windowpane staring at the flowers.

"The ladies have charge of the conservatory. They call it theirs—I never go in there. I guess I haven't been in there in a year, but I'll take you in there tomorrow and show you all through it. There are a lot of nice flowers on the other side there that you can't see from

here. Rosamond has some orange trees in there and sometimes we get some very nice oranges from them. If there are any there to-morrow we'll pick them."

Kent pushed his hands into the pockets of his trousers, puffed contentedly at his cigar and walked slowly about the room, searching through the books carefully.

"I guess I haven't any picture books here. You see we never had any little boys in this house, and I haven't anything here to amuse you with."

"You don't need picture books to look at in this big house," Jack answered quickly.

Kent laughed good-naturedly and his eyes left the books and wandered to Jack who was pressing his face tightly against the glass, staring through at the flowers.

"How big is the house you live in?"

"We just have one room."

"Where is it?"

"On the top floor."

"Do your mother and father live there too?"

"My real parents are dead. My adopted father lives there."

Kent removed the cigar from his lips and gazed thoughtfully at the lighted end for some seconds before he spoke.

"It is getting rather dark to look at those flowers, isn't it?"

"I can see the white ones, but the red ones are turning black."

Kent pressed one of the buttons and whispered to the servant to turn on the lights in the conservatory. He laughed heartily when the flowers blossomed out under the glare of the electric lights and Jack stepped back from the window clapping his hands with delight.

"Oh, don't the flowers look pretty now, and doesn't that old man look black standing amongst those white roses?"

"He's pretty black, isn't he? We call him 'Old Black Joe.' He used to be a slave away down South. I'll have him tell you some stories about himself when he was a boy and how his master used to whip him."

"Like 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'?"

"Yes, have you seen 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'?"

"No, but Dad has read it to me and told me

about it and how they whipped poor old 'Uncle Tom' and how little 'Eva' went to Heaven."

"What does your adopted father do?"

"He writes."

"What does he write?"

"I don't know. He says he guesses it's trash because no one will buy it."

Jack's old-fashioned manner and the quick, direct way in which he expressed himself not only amused Kent, but it explained the fact that his time had been spent with much older companions than himself.

"Do you go to school?"

"Yes, I go to Dad's school."

"Where is your Dad's school?"

"Home in our room."

"Is your father your teacher?"

"Yes, we have school every morning right after breakfast."

"What does he teach you?"

"Arithmetic, reading, spelling, manners—"

"Do you like to study?"

"Yes, but Dad won't let me study as much as I want to. We just have school for two

hours and then he puts my books away and makes me play."

"Well, you like to play, don't you?"

"Yes, but I would rather study. I like to learn things. I'd like to learn how to make a subway that you couldn't sweep off like Dad does the one I built under our cot-bed."

Jack drew his face from the windowpane and glanced over his shoulder at Kent, who shook with laughter at his remark, but the picture of his subway being swept away with a stubby old broom wasn't at all funny to him and he placed his nose against the glass and continued studying the flowers.

Kent seated himself on the large leather divan, placed his elbow on his knees and laughed again as he drew a picture of the subway being swept onto a dustpan, but Jack was perfectly contented with the picture before him, and he held his face to the window and permitted Kent to laugh at something he considered anything but humorous.

"Does your father sweep your subway up every day?"

"'Most every day. Some days I do the sweeping."

"I suppose you forget to sweep under the bed, don't you?"

"I don't forget, but I just don't sweep my subway out on purpose."

"Doesn't your father scold you?"

"No, he just laughs."

"What do you do when he sweeps your subway out?"

"I just laugh and build a new one."

"What do you do when your father scolds you?"

"He never scolds me."

"Hasn't he ever scolded you?"

"No."

"Did your real father ever scold you?"

"I never saw my real father. He died before I was born."

"Do you remember your mamma?"

"No, but I have her picture. My mamma looks just like the Miss Kent who brought me here. I just love Miss Kent."

"Everyone who knows Miss Kent loves her," Kent replied slowly. "How did Miss Kent find you?"

"I don't know. She just came and got me

and brought me here in a nice big automobile."

"Do you like to ride in automobiles?"

"Yes, I never rode in one before and we got here almost as soon as we started."

"We'll go for a long ride tomorrow. Aren't you getting tired looking at those flowers?"

"No, I love flowers and birds and squirrels."

"There are quite a number of birds in the conservatory and they'll be singing for all they are worth tomorrow—one just tries to out-sing the other. Sometimes we have to lower the sunshades to darken the conservatory so they'll stop."

"Oh, why don't you let them sing? Birds are happy when they sing!"

"Yes, but you see we are afraid they will strain their voices and we don't want them to do that, do we?"

Jack dragged a long drawn out "no" from his throat that seemed to carry a great deal of doubt with it, for he thought in his own mind that birds knew as much about a bird's voice as a human being did.

"I don't think birds would hurt their voices singing. They just sing because they can't

help it. They are born to sing. They don't have to take singing lessons like people do."

"Have you ever taken singing lessons?"

"No, but I'm going to if Dad ever sells a publisher one of his books."

"How old is your adopted father?"

"I really don't know."

"Has he got gray hair?"

"No, he is young like Miss Kent."

"I think you'll have to take me down and introduce me to your father—I think I would like him. Do you think he would like me?"

"Yes, he would surely like you."

"How do you know he would like me?"

"Because you are Miss Kent's father."

"Does he like Miss Kent?"

"Yes, didn't you say everyone likes Miss Kent?"

"I wonder why?"

"I don't know why—you just like her because you can't help it."

"Did your father say he liked her?"

"No—but I knew he did from the way he looked at her."

"How many times did Miss Kent call at your house?"

"Just once, I guess."

"I think you have studied those flowers long enough, don't you? Won't you come over here and visit me?"

Jack placed Kent's pleading request under immediate consideration, but the sight of the flowers kept his little face pressed against the window.

"Do you know," Kent continued in a softer tone, "you haven't told me your name yet?"

"You haven't asked me," Jack replied playfully, and he had forgotten the flowers and was in the center of the room before he had finished his remark.

"Well, I'll ask you now—what is it?" and he stretched his open hands forward.

Jack seized the forefinger of each hand and clapped them together as roughly as his baby strength would permit and exclaimed in a teasing tone, "Jack."

"Jack what?" Kent inquired, trying to imitate the teasing tone in the child's voice.

"I guess that is all," was the teasing reply,

and he shook his head as if to warn Kent that it was useless to ask any more questions on the subject.

Kent gripped the little hands tightly, drew the small body between his knees and locked it in the circle he made by crossing his feet.

Jack's eyes danced with enthusiasm and his lips quivered with a confident smile. The mind that had been trained on Wall Street saw at once that there was some joke in the air regarding the child's last name and it wasn't long before Jack was tricked into revealing it in full.

Kent closed one eye, moved his lips silently as if he were trying to recall something which had slipped from his memory, and then whispered slowly, "How does your adopted father spell his name?"

Jack spelled the name of "John Weatherbee" innocently and correctly. Kent squeezed the little hands tighter and gazed into the baby eyes several seconds before he spoke. He glanced back over his cold, stormy interview with the father of the child he was holding in his arms, he shook his head slowly and grunt-

ed, "I see—I see—your adopted father has no secretary—has he?"

"No."

"Of course not—of course not—describe him to me, won't you?"

After Jack had granted his request, the heavy head swung again and the gruff voice grunted, "I guess I was wrong, but I wonder why he told the ladies he was his secretary."

Jack watched the cold gray eyes close and the heavy lines in the forehead grow deeper and he counted them until he was forced to inform Kent that he was hurting his hands by squeezing them so hard.

"Has Miss Kent got your mamma's picture?"

"Yes."

"I would like to see it."

"I'll get it for you. It is upstairs in her room," and he tried to climb from between Kent's legs, but Kent squeezed him between his knees and held his hands firmly.

"Don't bother about it now, you can show it to me tomorrow. So you haven't any name but Jack?"

"I guess that is all."

Kent noticed the strong, careful way in which Jack emphasized the word "guess" and he smiled pleasantly at the youthful innocence.

"How did your real father spell his name?"

Jack spelled the name of "Reginold Ather-ton" out distinctly. He felt Kent's hands, which were holding his, tremble. His face turned deathly pale, and the big cigar fell from his thick, quivering lips. The wild look of the cold, gray eyes that were staring into his frightened him and he tried to draw away, but he was as powerless as if he had been locked in a steel safe.

Rosamond had hugged the library door as tightly as possible without being seen or heard. She had listened and followed every word of the conversation carefully. She waited anxiously for it to continue, but the long silence puzzled and tempted her curiosity. She peeked into the open door when she heard Jack say "you are hurting me," and she saw the child wrapped in her father's arms, his cheek resting on the curly head. She heard the heavy, rough voice break into a soft sob, and she tiptoed away to describe the picture to her mother.

CHAPTER XIX

JACK struggled and grunted for his freedom until he became convinced that his efforts were useless as long as Kent wished to hold him in his arms, so he rested his head against Kent's shoulder and remained there for a short time, but the sentiment was all on Kent's side, for the little fellow was waiting patiently to be released, he wanted to get another peek at the flowers in the beautiful conservatory.

Kent placed his hands on the child's shoulders, pushed him back as far as his arms would reach and stared into his eyes until Jack smiled faintly and remarked in a quiet tone that showed he didn't approve of the tearful attitude that everyone whom he had met in the house had taken toward him:

"Everybody I have met in this house has cried all over me."

Kent rocked his head to and fro slowly many times before he spoke.

"Have they all cried on you?"

"All but the little girl," Jack answered

quickly. "Mrs. Kent cried, and Miss Kent cried down at our house and then she cried again up here, but the little girl just laughed and shook me."

"Well, you see the little girl hasn't passed the laughing age yet. She laughs at everything, but she'll cry too some day," and Kent shook the little shoulders affectionately, then pinched the cheeks and pushed the curls back from his forehead.

"Do you like the little girl because she didn't cry?"

Jack nodded his head quickly and before he had ceased, Kent inquired if he liked Mrs. Kent and the head continued shaking, and shook while he informed Kent in a most convincing tone that he liked all the ladies and just loved Miss Kent.

"I want you to like me, too," Kent whispered, "for I like you and I want you to be my chum. Do you think you are going to like me?"

"Yes, I like you already. Miss Kent said that you didn't talk much, but you do. You talk a lot, don't you?"

Kent's mind was far away from anything humorous, but Jack's frank remark, which was meant as a compliment, forced him to laugh heartily. His fingers wandered through the child's curls;—he wound a curl around each of his forefingers, and would pull his hand away only to find it travelling back to pinch the rosy cheeks and from the cheeks it would go to the curls and back to the cheeks again.

"Do I talk too much?"

"No, I like to talk a lot and ask questions. Dad says I ask too many questions."

"Well, you just ask me all the questions you want to," and he gave the cheeks another tender squeeze. "What time does your Dad put you to bed?"

"About eight o'clock."

"I guess it's after eight now," and Kent drew his watch from his pocket and pressed the button quickly after he had glanced at it. "Why, it's nearly nine o'clock. Joe will take you up to Miss Kent and she'll tuck you away and I'll see you in the morning and we'll go and look at the flowers and have a big long talk. Have you got a kiss for your new chum?"

Jack wound his tiny arms around Kent's neck and kissed him affectionately and Kent held him tightly while "Joe" stood at the door and awaited orders.

"Joe, take Mr. —— Mr. ——, take my chum to Miss Rosamond and tell her he is ready to retire," and Joe led Jack up the broad stairs and he pounded each step in vain with his tiny feet trying to make them squeak.

"These stairs just won't talk, will they?"

"I dun-o es I 'ave heard 'em, but I guess if anyone can make 'em talk yo am that pusion, chil'. Yo 'ave cernly started a buzz in this 'ouse such as I neva heard afo'. What is yo name, anyhow?"

"Jack," was the quick reply in a loud voice, and he stopped suddenly and stared up at the wondering white eyes that were glaring out of the black, shiny face at him.

"Jack—Jack what?"

"Jack; and I guess that is all," and he pulled Joe on his way up the stairs, pounding away at each step in hope it might creak.

Joe delivered him to the ladies, who received him as a long lost child and he was hugged by

one until the other succeeded in getting possession of him, but he still looked upon his reception as a huge joke and accepted it all playfully, laughing and struggling until he escaped from one only to find himself in the arms of another.

Rosamond took charge of him for the night and his eyes opened wide when she ushered him into her room and he found that during his absence, a tiny bed which matched Rosamond's had been placed there for him.

"Oh, look at the funny little bed!" he exclaimed, as he paused just inside the door.

"That is yours. Do you like it?" Rosamond inquired anxiously.

"Yes, and it has got a little tent on it just like yours, hasn't it?"

"Yes, Helen slept in that bed when she was a little girl like you."

His eyes left the bed quickly and searched Rosamond's somewhat reproachfully for many seconds before he informed her with a great deal of pride that he was a boy.

Rosamond apologized for her careless mistake and assured him with another kiss that

she knew he was a boy and was very happy over the fact. The pride he had shown in his rather boastful way of announcing that he was a boy forced her to refrain from informing him that there were no little boy's night clothes in the house and he would have to sleep in one of Helen's baby night dresses until Monday, so she decided to prepare him for bed and allow him to make the discovery himself and she waited with much pleasure to see if he would notice the difference. She drew the thin, white nightdress over his curly head and smiled as she started to tie the baby blue ribbon about his neck.

He examined his little bare arms, which stuck out through the short sleeves that came just below his shoulders and gave each sleeve a good pull to see if he couldn't bring it down where he thought it belonged, but he found that his efforts were useless. He untied the little drawn ribbon in the end of each sleeve and gave it another severe pull. He glanced down at the body of the dress to see if it was cut on the same plan as the sleeves, but found it plenty long enough, in fact too long, for

many inches were lying on the floor. He examined the sleeves again carefully and finally remarked in a puzzled tone: "This is the funniest nightgown I ever saw."

Rosamond bit her lip to conceal her smile and tied the blue ribbons of the sleeves in pretty bow-knots.

"Isn't your nightgown like this?" she asked in a tone of forced surprise.

"No," Jack replied quickly, and he gazed with contempt at the blue ribbons and long white lace which hung at the end of the sleeves. "My nightgown buttons down the front and has long sleeves and legs on it. This is like the ones they have on girl dolls in the store windows."

"You'll like this after you get to sleep."

"Well, after I am asleep I won't know I've got it on."

"No, you will forget all about it and Monday we'll get some with legs on them, just like yours."

"Maybe Dad will be back and take me home before Monday," and he glanced up into Rosamond's eyes with a hopeful smile.

The humorous expression darted from Rosamond's face and a sad twinkle crept into her soft brown eyes and her voice trembled as she whispered, "Don't you want to live here?"

"Yes, I want to live here until Dad gets back."

"Then do you want to go back and live with your Dad?"

"Of course, you wouldn't want to go and live away from your Dad, would you?"

"Perhaps I would if I liked some other place better."

"I wouldn't like any place better than where my Dad is."

"Don't you like it here?"

"Yes, but I like our house better."

"Why?"

"Because it isn't so big. This house is like a big store and you haven't any cat here."

"Yes, we have; there are two cats here and they have great, large, bushy tails and we have a nice bull dog and we have horses and we have two nice automobiles. You like automobiles, don't you?"

"Yes, but your stairs don't squeak like ours,"

and there was a challenging note in the child's voice and a proud twinkle in his eye and he held his little head high in the air and waited for Rosamond's reply, but she only twined his curls around her fingers and nodded her head in silence. She lifted him into the little bed and pressed her lips to his, but he pushed her head away gently and reminded her that he shouldn't go to bed until after he had said his prayers and he kneeled at the edge of the bed and repeated the Lord's prayer aloud. He didn't hear the door being opened, for Mrs. Kent made no sound as she turned the knob and peeked in at the tiny figure and heard the words, "God bless mamma, papa, and make me a good child for Jesus' sake, Amen."

Rosamond placed her finger on her lips and her mother closed the door silently and returned to her room.

Joe paced up and down past the open door of the library until both hands of the clock which stood on Kent's desk had reached twelve. He watched Kent who had been sitting on the divan with his elbows on his knees and his face buried in his hands for at least an hour.

He had often sat in a dark corner and watched him pace the floor hurling heavy clouds of smoke from his cigar when he was worried over the business wars of Wall Street, but he had never known him to remain in one position without smoking as long as he had in the present one. He stood before the door and coughed mechanically several times, but his efforts went unnoticed and he decided to try and interrupt the silence by speaking, though he spoke twice in a loud tone before he was heard, but Kent made no reply.

"Can I get yo' anything, sir?" he pleaded for the third time, and Kent only grunted, "Nothing, Joe, nothing."

"Do yo' know it is twelve o'clock, sir?"

"All right, Joe, lock up," he ordered in a sighing voice that was strange to the servant who had listened to his gruff, boisterous tones for so many years. He pushed his hands into the pockets of his trousers, mounted the heavy stairs, entered his room and threw himself on the couch. Joe guarded his door and listened breathlessly until he was sure he heard him retiring. He looked at his watch as he stole

down the hall and whispered to himself, "Ma Goad, it am fo' o'clock."

Breakfast was ready at eight o'clock, which was the usual hour. For years Kent's fruit and coffee had been served in his room, or at his desk in the library, but he instructed the butler to serve his breakfast in the dining room.

"Is Mrs. Kent having her breakfast in her room?"

"No, sir, she is coming downstairs to breakfast this mornin'."

"Are the girls going to dine downstairs?"

"Miss Rosamond am, but Miss Helen is going to have her coffee and toast in her room as usual, sir."

During breakfast, Kent made several apparent attempts to be unconcerned and jovial, but his efforts were forced and his humor displayed the mechanism and struggle that was back of it trying to force it over the mind that was still in a bewildered condition.

Jack was so busy watching the coffee bubbling up through the spout of the French coffee pot, that it was hard for him to answer

the many questions which were being hurled at him from all sides.

Kent asked him for the third time how he slept and after he had given the question considerable thought, he replied that he didn't know how he slept, he just went to sleep and didn't know anything after that, but Rosamond was perfectly capable of answering the question, for she had spent most of the night watching and rearranging the spread about his shoulders and she assured her father that he had spent a very peaceful night.

"Isn't Miss Helen coming to breakfast?" he inquired after the breakfast was half over.

"Miss Helen is having her breakfast in her room," Kent replied quickly, for he showed an eagerness to answer all the child's questions and Mrs. Kent and Rosamond seemed anxious to give him the opportunity.

"Is she having her breakfast in the room where she sleeps?"

"Yes."

"Is she ill?"

"I hope not," Kent answered with a smile.

"What is she eating her breakfast in her bedroom for then?"

"She likes to eat her breakfast up there."

"Dad made me stay in bed and eat my breakfast one day when I had a cold."

"Do you like to eat your breakfast in bed?"

"No, you get the crumbs all over everything. The top is coming off!" he yelled, as he watched the steam force the glass cover of the coffee pot up and down.

Kent always spent Sunday morning with his private secretary, but he was dismissed without seeing Kent, though he insisted that there were several matters which needed Kent's immediate attention, but Kent sent word he was busy and to let everything stand as it was until Monday.

Joe was ordered to raise all the sunshades in the conservatory. Kent led Jack up and down the carpeted aisles and tried to explain the nature of the different flowers, but found he knew less about them than the child did himself.

"Where did you learn so much about flowers?"

"Dad takes me up in Central Park and teaches me their names. This is an azalea, isn't it?"

"I guess so," Kent grunted, and he smiled at his own ignorance. "You see I don't come in here very often. I don't have time. I guess I haven't been in here in a year."

"Don't you like flowers?"

"Yes, I like them well enough. They look prettier this morning than I have ever seen them look before. Everything seems to be in bloom, doesn't it?—and the birds seem to be singing softer—I guess they are singing for you. They yell so sometimes when I am working in the library that I have to shut my window, but they seem quite polite this morning—I like them."

During the conversation Kent had plucked a blossom or a bud from the many different plants and stuck the stem under the patches on Jack's dress and when he left the conservatory he looked like a walking flower bed, for each patch was partly hidden with a bright flower, and each curl held a different colored pansy.

"This is a fine day," Kent remarked pleas-

antly as he gazed up at the sun which was glaring down through his library window. "How about that automobile ride?"

"I'm ready," Jack replied quickly. "But these flowers will blow off, won't they?"

"Let them blow off, there are plenty more where they came from," Kent growled boastfully.

The open car was ordered and Jack was bundled up in one of Helen's seal-lined automobile coats. Kent laughed when he tried to turn the sleeves up to give Jack the use of his hands, but found it impossible, for after he had taken a few rolls in each sleeve, he found the ends were closed and hung in balls many inches below the child's fingers.

Jack clapped them together playfully and tumbled to the floor when he tried to walk and stepped on the bottom of the coat which lay in circles around his feet.

"I'll have to hold this up like the ladies do their dresses, won't I?" and he tried to catch hold of the coat, but found he was deprived of the use of his hands which were buried in the long sleeves. Kent smiled as he watched him

struggling to raise the heavy garment above his feet.

Rosamond had watched the scene carefully and studied her father's affectionate attentions and remarks with much pride and satisfaction. "There seems to be more coat than man there."

"Don't you believe it. There is more real man in that coat than anyone ever dreamed of."

"I guess you are right, father," she said as she watched him draw Helen's blue cap down over his curls that left nothing but large blue eyes showing.

While Kent was showing Jack through the conservatory, the ladies were holding a meeting and they decided that they would not accompany their father on the automobile trip in order to let him be alone with Jack as much as possible. Each had planned some plausible excuse to offer when they were invited, but they discovered, much to their surprise, that no excuses or explanations were necessary, for when Kent pulled Helen's little cap down over the curls, he took Jack under his arm, strolled out to the car, tucked him under the robe and

ordered the driver to drive to the Country Club.

As they drove along the edge of the Hudson, he explained with childish enthusiasm the different places of interest. Jack became an object of curiosity at the Country Club, but Kent forgot to even notice any of his fellow-members, for his time and attention were completely absorbed by Jack's many questions.

Kent was seldom seen at the Club; his great business interests claimed all of his time and robbed him of any pleasure of the many clubs of which he was a member. His great financial power and his gruff personality held him aloof from any familiar questions regarding the patched gingham dress, which held the attention of every person in the large room.

Kent's ignorance of plain lemonade was humorously displayed, for it was ordered and discussed and re-ordered at least a half dozen times before he could decide just what kind of a drink was best for the child's health. He thought a cold drink would make him cold and a hot drink might make him hot.

"Why not make one of plain, pure water of

ordinary temperature and put no ice in it?" the waiter inquired, after he had shifted his weight from one leg to the other many times.

"I guess that is a good idea," Kent answered after he had thought it over carefully, but Jack said that he wanted a little piece of ice in it and there was no further argument on the subject.

"Yes, put a little ice in it," Kent suggested, as if the idea were his own, "but don't put any cherries or acid or any of that truck in it."

"Oh, yes, put a red cherry in it!" Jack exclaimed.

"Well, put a couple of cherries in it and hurry up with it. I could have made a dozen lemonades while you have been standing here!"

The lemonade was served and Kent watched it and the cherries disappear and interrupted Jack's party by asking between each sup if it was good.

Jack was carefully wrapped in the large coat and they started back for the Kent mansion.

The slated roof of the Kent mansion on Fifth Avenue and the old tin roof that covered the ceiling of the garret room on Twenty-

ninth Street were heated by the same warm, friendly sun, but the walls of the Kent house surrounded more happiness than they had for many years and the slanting ceiling of the garret room hung over more loneliness than it had ever covered since it sheltered Weatherbee's tall figure.

There was a constant buzz of joy and happiness in the Kent house. The flowers in the large conservatory seemed to look more beautiful than they had ever appeared before, and the birds seemed to swing on the wire swings of their gilded cages and sing sweeter than they had ever sung before, but in the little garret room the conversation between Warner and Weatherbee jerked and dragged. Each man tried to force himself to talk and cheer the other and each one's efforts were noticed by the other.

Each man would unconsciously pause in the middle of a sentence and lapse into a long silence. Weatherbee had cooked a more elaborate dinner than had been served in the little room for many weeks, but it hadn't tasted the same as the scanty ones where all

three had sat together and joked over the absence of butter; sometimes sugar and another time meat, perhaps, but today there was more of the dinner untouched than had been eaten. Each man tried to convince the other how happy he was, or should be, over Jack's future, but the statements were forced and the words were pushed and crowded from their throats.

The financial success that had entered the little room seemed like an unwelcome speck on the large, lonely gap which Jack's absence caused. The little ray of sunlight which had crawled in through the tiny window looked lonely as it rested on the old rag carpet.

Weatherbee sauntered to the window, drew the faded curtain aside and gazed up at the clear blue sky. As he held the colorless rag in his left hand, he pushed the right hand into the pocket of his trousers and the sound of the silver change surprised him and he drew his hand away quickly. He had forgotten that he possessed such a thing as money.

"Let's get out of here, Warner," he said impatiently. "Let's get on the top of a bus and ride up Fifth Avenue."

As the heavy bus rattled its way up Fifth Avenue, Weatherbee studied the occupants of each automobile carefully and he glanced from the corners of his eyes at each window as they passed the Kent mansion, but the little face he was watching for was missing, and his eyes wandered back into each automobile that passed.

The traffic officer at Fifty-ninth Street brought all vehicles going either way on Fifth Avenue to a stop and ordered the cross-town cars to move quickly. Weatherbee searched each car carefully until his eye fell on Kent sitting with his arm around a bundle of fur-lined cloth. He seized Warner's arm and gripped it tightly. "There's Jack!" he whispered.

"Sitting down there in an automobile with Kent. I wonder if he'll see us?"

"Yell at him."

"No, he may look up," and Weatherbee rose to his feet.

The officer signalled the Fifth Avenue vehicles to move and the large French automobile whizzed passed the rattling bus, but Warner and Weatherbee were not seen—for Jack was sleeping soundly.

CHAPTER XX

THOUGH Sunday served Warner and Weatherbee with a large share of loneliness, it flooded the Kent household with happiness, Mrs. Murray with excitement and Wartle with several new wounds from his dull razor.

Mrs. Murray was to become Mrs. Wartle at three o'clock. She had ordered Wartle to have the house smothered in shamrocks, and the orders were obeyed to the best of his ability.

He thought the matter out carefully in his own mind and decided that he could smother the house as artistically as any decorator he knew of and by doing it, would save at least three or four dollars. He talked the subject over with all the florists on Twenty-ninth Street and several on Third Avenue and the lowest bid he received was three dollars, which didn't include the cost of the shamrocks. He informed each one that he was willing to pay a dollar for the job, but it wasn't worth any more.

“Hall you ’ave to do his to set the pots haround hon the floor, hand then pick ’em hup hafter the knot his tied. Hit don’t matter where you set them—hit’s hall foolishness hanyway, hand hif Hi can’t get hit done for ha dollar, Hi will do hit myself. Hif you’ll do hit for ha dollar, Hi’ll let you stay to the weddin’, hand you can ’ave supper hin the bargain. You hare Hirish, hand Mrs. Murray won’t mind, because she doesn’t care who his hat the weddin’ has long has they hare Hirish. You’ll ’ave ha good time. Mrs. Murray has harranged with Sweeney to furnish the heating and drinking hand she ’as ’ired some fiddlers hand there’s going to be music too!”

The temptations of the Wartle-Murray wedding didn’t appeal to the florists, who had other engagements to keep, so the decorations were to be made by Wartle who started down Twenty-ninth Street with a tiny pot of shamrocks under each arm.

There was no demand for such flowers in the neighborhood and after he had visited each florist, he succeeded in gathering seven small plants and five of the seven had long since

passed their useful age and the withered stems hung lifelessly over the edges of the little clay pots. He scattered the seven pots about the room and replaced them several times until he thought each plant made an excellent showing. He stood in the center of the room and eyed each decorated spot carefully.

"Well, the place hisn't smothered, but hit looks very tasty."

He wondered what sort of an impression they would make on a person coming into the room, seeing them as they entered; so starting from the front steps he made a hurried entrance without becoming at all excited over their brilliancy.

"Hit's because Hi fixed 'em myself that they don't startle me," he said. "Hif Hi 'adn't seen 'em huntill Hi 'ad walked hinto the room, Hi'm sure hit would look more flowery."

He lowered the blue window shades, closed the door, and went to his room mumbling to himself.

"Hi've done my duty hand Hi know she'll be tickled. Hif she hisn't tickled when she sees 'em, Hi know she'll be delighted when Hi tell

'er Hi fixed 'em hall myself hand 'ow cheap Hi got 'em."

He gazed into the mirror and heaved a deep sigh as he passed the ends of his fingers over the beard, which had been thriving for the past two days.

"Hi wish hit was hon the top hof my 'ead hinstead hof hon my face," he whispered to himself, and glanced sadly at the pieces of sticking plaster which covered the wounds inflicted by the last operation.

"Hi suppose she'll be hangry hif Hi don't shave for the weddin'." He stood before the mirror some time figuring out the easiest route around the different cuts; he applied the lather and when he had shaved around the four pieces of sticking plaster, it was necessary to add three new pieces to cover the fresh cuts.

"Hi look like ha prize fighter," he grunted, when he looked at the long white strip that covered most of his upper lip. "Hit's hall 'er doings, though, she hinsisted hon hit. Hif Hi 'ad 'ad my hown way, Hi'd never 'ave cut ha 'air hoff my face hand hif Hi keep hon trying to shave myself, Hi'll cut my face hoff yet. Hi know Hi will!"

He had his own peculiar system of keeping books. Each penny he paid out was carefully marked down in one book and the name of the article given which caused its departure. In another book he kept a careful account of each penny that found its way into the Wartle establishment and he often sat for hours tracing the whereabouts of a penny that had disappeared unaccounted for, and once after two days' strenuous figuring, he traced a single copper out of the front window into the hands of an organ grinder—but only once. It had never happened but once and would doubtless never happen again.

He sat on the edge of his white iron bed, which still possessed a brass knob on one corner, and went over the expenses of the wedding, which were crawling up beyond his expectations. He had purchased a new white shirt that resembled linen—which tallied up eighty-three cents on the expense list. A collar of the same quality for fifteen cents and a red bow tie which looked like a continuation of his face. He pressed the end of his forefinger against the large piece of sticking

plaster which was hanging on his upper lip and grumbled to himself, "Hi wonder hif she'll hexpect me to call for 'er with ha 'ack hor hif she'll be satisfied to walk hover. Hit hisn't far, hand the walk will do 'er good hanyway."

After more than fifteen minutes had been spent in silent meditation it was decided to walk the bride to her new home. He felt sure she would growl a little at the start, but he knew that she would feel just as well after she arrived, so the new white shirt, the collar and red tie were donned, the corners of the different pieces of sticking plaster were pressed carefully into their places, the moth-eaten hat was tipped a trifle to the right ear, and with the family umbrella he started for his bride.

News of the Wartle-Murray wedding had caused a great deal of excitement in the neighborhood. Some considered it a great match, others considered it a foolish one. Some referred to it as a financial landing for Mrs. Murray. She had confided to her most intimate friends and friends of theirs the nature of her contract with Wartle, and she always spoke of it as her "widdin' contract."

When she informed her friend Hannigan, the cab driver, that she was to become Mrs. Wartle, he threw up both hands, "He's a miser!" But he lowered them quickly and yelled "Bully fer you!" when Mrs. Murray told him that she had a written contract whereby everything that he possessed, including himself, became hers before the knot was tied, and at her request, Hannigan agreed to be best man. He explained to her that he had never met Wartle, but she assured him that that didn't make any difference.

"He don't know anny one that's goin' to be at the widdin'. None of his frin's is comin'. No one is goin' to be there but moi frin's. Oi didn't allow him to invoit anny of his Johnny-Bulls. It's goin' to be a Irish widdin'. Oi've invoited iverybody. 'The house is goin' to be smothered with shamrocks, an' it's goin' to be as swell a widdin' as has bin pulled off on the East Soid of New York City in years!"

Hannigan congratulated her on her business ability and agreed to bring his friends and be on hand at the appointed time.

"Bring anny of yer frinds an' tell thim to

bring their frin's. Sweeney is goin' ter furnish the grub and there'll be plinty fer all—and Sweeney is goin' to be there himsilf."

She had given up her rooms and informed the landlord that she would vacate them not later than Sunday noon. She owed him a few weeks' rent, but explained the circumstances, including her "widdin'" contract and assured him the rent would be paid as soon as she took possession of the Wartle estate. She had engaged the boys around the neighborhood to carry the furniture and all of her belongings over to her new home. They worked faithfully and had swept and scrubbed the floors of the two small rooms for their next occupant, and they were also to be paid liberally from the Wartle estate.

Anne McCabe, who was Mrs. Murray's neighbor and lifelong friend, was to be bridesmaid and had promised to see her through and stick to the finish. When Mrs. Murray first broke the news to her and asked her to stand up with her, she replied, "Oi'll be there, Murray, wid hoigh heeled shlipppers on both me feet."

She was surprised when she heard that Mrs. Murray was going to marry an Englishman, but sincerely approved of the match after she had listened to Mrs. Murray's side of the story.

"Oi'm not gittin' lazy, Anne, but Oi'm tired of chasin' me knuckles up an' down a wash-board. Oi know Wartle's an awful thing to look at, but he's funny—sure, he's as good as a circus to have about the house. I can't look at 'im without laughin'—and he's as aisy to handle as a lame horse. He's got a gorgeous house, plinty of money. It's all moine and Oi'm takin' no chances. He has no bum relations hangin' around loik the last one Oi was toid to. Sure Murray had more hungry frin's and relations hangin' around than ye' would foind in a 'Poor House.' Oi used to have to put me breakfast under me pillow at noight ar they'd have it aten before Oi'd git up in the mornin'."

They viewed the match from every standpoint and both agreed that Mrs. Murray had the best of it, "goin' and comin'."

"Sure Murray give me the worst of it from the day Oi married him. He worked me loik a

Jew would work a Christian, but it was a good lesson—it saved me gittin' stung ag'in. Oi've had a lawyer look over this contract and he siz all Oi 'ave to do is to sit back an' take the money. He siz Oi'm the first American bride that has ever spilt anny English coin in the United States. He had his toipwriter copy off the contract an' is goin' to have it printed in the paper. He siz it'll make thim hairesses that go to Europe wid a tub of money an' give it to them fureigners fer marryin' thim, sick whin they raid it. He siz the King of England'll go nutty wid rage whin he hears it."

Both were dressed for the wedding and waiting for the groom to appear. It was quite evident that red was their favorite color. The dressmaker insisted on making Mrs. Murray a low neck gown, but she positively refused and laughed at the idea.

"Oi'll be covered from the chin to the fluer. Sure Oi have a neck on me loik a withered pickle and Oi'm not anxious to show it to everyone, an' Oi want sleeves in the dress too an' Oi want thim to come clean down to me knuckles," and her orders were carried out to

the letter. The sleeves came to her finger tips and the collar of her dress reached the point of her long, thin chin.

It was the wish of both ladies to have their dresses for this particular occasion made of the same material and exactly the same style. They were both made by the same dressmaker. The black silk for the dresses and the red silk lace and ribbons for the trimmings were purchased by Mrs. Murray and everything, including the making, was to be paid for out of the Wartle purse. Each had arranged the other's hair in the very latest style, and Mrs. Murray's keen sense of humor brought forth a hearty laugh every time she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror.

"Sure ye are a picture, Ann, but Oi look as if Oi had bin hit wid somethin' that spattered whin it struck me," and she re-arranged the red lace shawl which was hanging over her head. "Sure Oi hain't had these whoite gloves on an hour yit an' they're black already!"

Miss McCabe assured her that she had never looked as beautiful.

"Oi may look beautiful, but Oi feel as if Oi

was screwed up in a vice. These shippers are pinchin' the feet off me. Ann, do ye think me old tan lace shoes would show from under this dress?"

"No," was Miss McCabe's prompt and welcome reply. "Sure nobody will be lookin' at yer feet."

The white slippers were discarded and the old brown lace shoes which had done service for so many months took their place.

"Ye'll have to lace thim for me, Ann, for Oi can't shtoop in this rig."

"Sure Oi can't nather. Sit down an' put yer foot up on the chair here an' Oi'll do the best Oi can."

After the shoes were laced, she stood up to see if they showed and to the delight of both they were not visible. "Do they show whin Oi'm settin'?"

"No, yer dress touches the floor an' no one would ever know that ye had anny feet if ye didn't tell 'em."

"Thank God for that!" Mrs. Murray sighed with a great deal of relief.

The occupants of the different apartments

on each side of the street who had not received invitations to the wedding, were seated at the windows to watch Mrs. Murray depart for her new home. A large crowd of friendly children had gathered in front of her house and waited for the bride to appear. Some of the little soiled hands were filled with rice, some were empty, while a few others waited with some small flowers they had plucked from a lonely plant which had been reared on a window sill of a crowded flat. A friendly cheer went up from the little voices when they spied Wartle's small, fat figure slowly approaching under the moth-eaten silk hat. The many pieces of sticking plaster on his face caused a great deal of wonderment in the minds of the little folk. Some thought that he had been in a fight, while others said it was "fashin'ble"—that people always did that to their faces when they were going to be married and that Mrs. Murray would have her face fixed that way too, when she came down stairs.

Wartle elbowed his way through the crowd and mounted the stairs to Miss McCabe's rooms. Mrs. Murray answered his nervous

tap on the door and laughed heartily as she bade him enter.

"Hare you laughing hat my new necktie?" he asked with a feeble smile.

"No, Oi'm laughin' at what it's buttoned on. What toime is it?"

"Hit's ha little hafter two."

"Ye have a two-seated hack, hain't ye?"

Wartle hesitated several seconds before he found his voice and then announced in a guilty tone, "Hi 'aven't hany. Hi thought we could walk hover. Hit's such a nice day hand hit hisn't far hand—"

Mrs. Murray didn't give him a chance to explain further.

"Go out an' git the best two-seated hack ye can hire. Ye'll not walk me to me own weddin'. Ye Jew ye—sure ye can walk if ye loik, but Oi'll roid or Oi'll not go at tall!" and she assisted him out of the door and ordered him to get white horses if there were any in the city.

When Wartle returned to the street unaccompanied by Mrs. Murray, a bewildered expression crept into each child's face and a short

silence followed, but as soon as they recovered from the shock they showered Wartle with more questions than he could have answered in a whole day, even if he had been in his right mind, but he was not. He was not only uncomfortable in his new stiff shirt and collar, but he was very excited, he quickened his step to get away from the curious children, but they followed him, still inquiring for Mrs. Murray. He found himself completely surrounded, and was compelled to stop and give an explanation.

"For 'Eaven sake, keep quiet," he shouted as he raised the faded umbrella high in the air. "There his nothin' the matter. Hi'm goin' hafter ha 'ack, hand Hi'll be back hin ha few minutes."

He repeated the speech several times and some of the youngsters were satisfied with the explanation and returned to await his arrival at Mrs. Murray's though others followed him to the stable and rode back with him in his "'ack."

Wartle protested vigorously and tried hard to keep the youngsters out of the carriage, but they only laughed at his excited chatter and as

many as could crowded into the carriage and those who couldn't rode on the front with the driver and as many more clung to the rear springs.

His patience gave way entirely when the ones who had pushed their way into the seat with him insisted on knowing what had happened to his face. The perspiration had caused the corners of the different pieces of sticking plaster to curl up and they saw the cuts underneath and were convinced that his face was not slashed up in that manner just for style.

"Did you stumble and fall?" one child asked, but Wartle made no reply.

"No," one of the thoughtful ones grunted, "if he fell his nose would be cut too. He couldn't fall and hit both cheeks and his chin and neck without cutting his nose."

"Maybe something flew up and hit him."

"How could anything fly up and hit him in the neck?"

The comedian of the party informed them that lots of people got it in the neck.

"I bet he was playing with the cat!" one of the smaller ones whispered confidentially to her brother who was seated on her lap.

They put the question to Mr. Wartle at once, but received no answer, but the problem was solved in their minds. It was the cat—nothing but a cat could reach under a man's chin and cut in that way.

"Has Mrs. Murray seen you with your face like this?" another inquired as politely as his curious little voice would permit, but the question was ignored and Wartle tapped the floor of the carriage nervously with his umbrella. He tried to gaze out of the window, but such a luxury was prevented by the young unwelcome guests who were standing on either side, unable to find seats. The four short blocks seemed a long tedious journey to Wartle.

"Hi'll smother before Hi get there," he thought to himself and when the carriage stopped in front of Mrs. Murray's the disappointed cry went up, "Oh, are we here already?" and Wartle had to crowd his way out, but the treat of being in a real carriage hadn't been offered to the children of that neighborhood before and they insisted on remaining in the vehicle until Mrs. Murray arrived.

Wartle explained timidly as he wiped the perspiration from the well spots on his face, that it was impossible to get two white horses, but he got one.

"Hi got one white one hand one kind hof ha yellow one. The man honly 'ad one white one left. 'E used to 'ave two, but the hother one died."

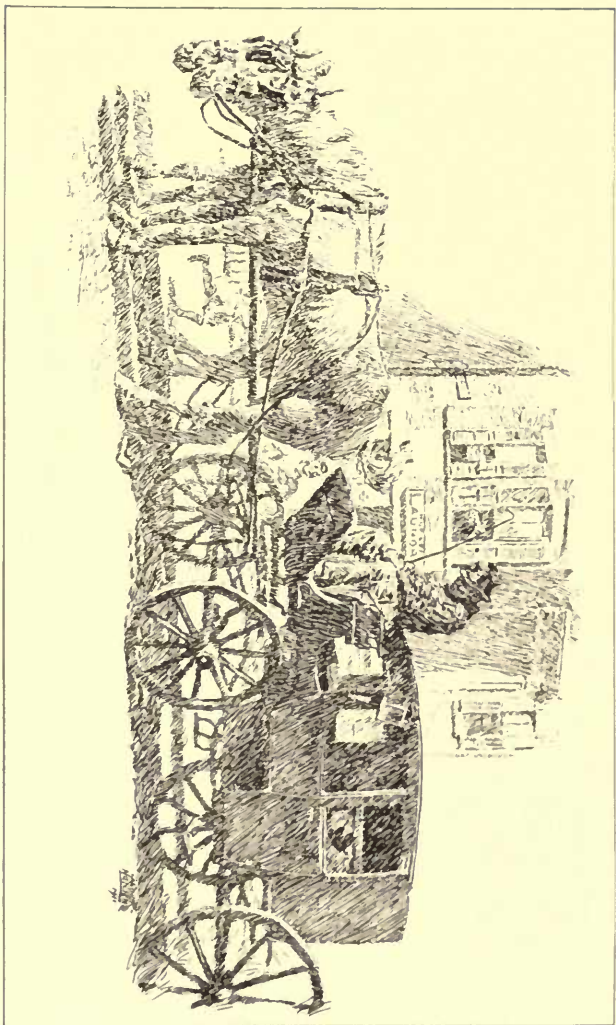
"Oi'll bet this one is nearly dead or ought to be."

When they reached the front steps she threw up both hands when she glanced at the horses with their heads hanging so low that their chins nearly touched the pavement.

"Fer the love of Heavins, look at that pair of goats to draw annyone to a weddin'. Even the driver's sleepin'," she gasped when she spied the dozing figure sitting on the seat with his chin resting on his chest.

The tails of the horses were worn quite short from constant labor. The flies kept them moving, and they had whipped the reins from the hands of their guide, who was slumbering peacefully, and they lay among their feet on the pavement.

"For the love of Heaven, look at that pair of goats to draw anygone to a weddin'. Even the driver's sleepin'!"



A cheer went up from the little friends when Mrs. Murray appeared on the steps draped in her red lace veil.

"Yell louder," she exclaimed, after she had taken in the picture with one disgusted glance. "Yell, and see if ye can't wake thim two mules and the driver up," and a roar went out from the little throats that succeeded in bringing the man on the seat to his senses, but the flies held the attention of the rear end of the horses and their tails whipped to and fro while their heads still hung as if in a quiet dream.

When Mrs. Murray closed the door of the carriage, several little flowers, and a few kernels of rice found their way through the broken window, she waved her long thin hand, smiled and bowed her head at the friendly little tots who were crying at the top of their small voices, "Good luck—God bless you," as the drowsy horses walked slowly up the street.

When she stepped in the hall of the Wartle home she searched the walls and floor carefully and stood for several seconds before she spoke.

Wartle studied the surprised expression on

her face and interrupted the silence. "'Ave you forgot something?" he whispered.

"No, Oi've not forgot nothin'," she answered sharply, "but you have!"

Wartle looked blankly at the old umbrella in his left hand and felt for his hat which he found resting on the back of his head. "No, Hi 'ave heverything."

"Where is thim shamrocks?" she growled in a low sarcastic tone.

A smile crept over Wartle's face. He raised both hands with much assurance. "Ho, Hi 'ave them hall hin 'ere," and he threw open the door leading to the front room and rushed in to raise the curtains.

Mrs. Murray made a slow stately entrance into the room and after she had surveyed it with one glance, sank into the nearest chair, looked steadily at Wartle, who had removed the hat and was holding it far from his side to be sure he wouldn't ruffle any of the silk. He rested a large portion of his heavy little figure on the handle of the umbrella and was smiling contentedly, but the smile vanished as he watched the angry expression on Mrs. Murray's face.

She looked at him, then at Miss McCabe and back at the withered shamrocks. She leaned back in her chair, pushed the tan-covered feet far out onto the floor, and shook her head silently for several seconds before she found words to express her disappointment and disgust.

"Well, ye scar-faced piker!" she whispered slowly. "Ye scar-faced piker. Ye're cheaper than a piker. A piker is a spendthrift along-soid of a cheap onion loik ye are. Here Oi've bin crackin' up this widdin' to all me frinds an' tellin' 'em how the house was to be smothered wid shamrocks an' this is what Oi git. Look at it! Seven measly shrubs that are a disgrace to Ireland. Take thim out of here, take thim out back of the house, take thim anny place, take thim out of me soight. Oi wouldn't have anny of me frin's see 'em. There'll be no decorations. Oi'll not be married in a house with a few pieces of withered fuzz loik thim settin' around. They look as if they had just got back from some old man's funeral. Go on, Oi tell ye, take 'em out er Oi'll throw thim out into the street!"

While Wartle gathered the small pots together, he mumbled in a sad, quivering voice that he had done the best he could.

"Hi rented hevery shamrock that was hin the neighborhood. Hi went to hevery flower shop there his. Hi would 'ave rented some hother kind hof flowers, but you said you didn't want hanything hin the 'ouse but shamrocks."

His explanation and trembling voice touched Mrs. Murray's soft spot and she threw her hands into the air and roared hilariously, when he stumbled over the small rug and fell headlong onto the floor, throwing the plants against the wall.

After he had obeyed Mrs. Murray's next order, he proved that he was more at home with a broom and dust-pan in his hands than he was with flowers.

"Ye can lave thim in the room," she said as she smiled at Miss McCabe, "and put the broom and dust-pan away."

She arranged the remaining shamrocks on the small table in the center of the room as Wartle made his exit.

"Oi can't help laughin' at 'im. He's so

rattled he don't know whither he's on his head or his feet, and the miser is so stingy he won't go to a barber, but tries to shave himself and he has his fat face nearly chopped off 'm."

Hannigan drove up with his own cab, and the two ladies hastened to the door to greet him.

"He's loaded to the neck," Mrs. Murray whispered as she watched him climb down off the seat with his whip in his hand.

"What is he bringing the whip in for?" Miss McCabe asked.

"Sure someone would swipe it if he left it out there. Don't say annything to him about drinkin', fer he has an orful timper and he foights at the drop of the hat. Oi don't know what he'll do whin he sees Wartle. Ye know they've niver met each other. Lord, he's pickled—look at 'im! He's bringin' the horse up on the walk to tie him to the iron fence."

"The police won't lit 'im shtand there, will they?"

"They will whin they foind out it's Hannigan's horse. Sure ivery cop in New York knows 'Tom Hannigan' an' they all love 'm."

He mounted the steps in an unsteady dignified manner and greeted the ladies quietly, making no apologies for his condition. He held fast to his whip while being presented to Wartle and gripped his hand tightly while he leaned far forward and squinted at the different pieces of sticking plaster. He threw a quizzical glance at Mrs. Murray, then viewed the face carefully again before he acknowledged the introduction.

"Yer face looks loik a piece of cheese that the rats had been gnawin' at," he remarked quietly, bending over in Wartle's direction so far that he lost his balance.

Wartle caught him by the shoulders and teetered him back gently to a standing position. "Hi was nervous when Hi was shaving han' the razor slipped."

"Shlipped," Hannigan grunted, "ye look as if ye fell on it!"

After he had complained of the room being extremely hot, Mrs. Murray and Miss McCabe assisted him and his whip into Wartle's sleeping room which adjoined the parlor and succeeded in persuading him to lie down until the ceremony was to be performed.

Sweeney arrived with three of his choice waiters. All three were related to him and had been schooled under his personal direction and knew as much about a piece of corned beef or a cabbage as any human being should know who was obliged to eat them.

The two ladies and Mr. Sweeney directed the arrangement of the dining-room, which was located in the basement, and it was soon put in readiness for the guests, who were arriving in parties of fives and sixes. The house was soon filled. The parlor in which the ceremony was to take place was quickly packed. Each step of the stairs served as a seat for three, and the narrow hallway was crowded with standees eager to catch a glimpse of the groom, whose frightened embarrassment had forced him to hide himself in one of the small closets.

Mrs. Murray squeezed her way through the crowd, shaking hands and "God blessin'" each one with a broad smile and a pat on the shoulder. She stood at the bottom of the stairs and threw kisses at those seated on the steps.

"Gratin's to ye all," she yelled. "Oi'd loik to shake yer hands, but Oi can't git up there wid-out a balloon. Lord, ain't it hot, and some frind has pinched me handkerchief."

"Is this yourn, Mrs. Murray?"

"It is," she answered. "Sure Ann McCabe made it fer me herself an' it ain't big enough to dry a floi's face wid. Oi'm afraid to put it near me nose for fear Oi'll inhale it."

The talk and laughter fell to a whispering buzz when it was learned that Father Gorman was elbowing his way up the steps. Those in the hall crowded toward each wall allowing him to pass into the parlor.

"Well, Father, this is goin' some, ain't it?" Mrs. Murray exclaimed as she shook his hand, and her face was covered with a smile that extended from one ear to the other. "It looks loik the Hudson-Fulton celebration, only Oi haven't got anny boats or water." She leaned forward and whispered, "but Oi have plinty of other wet stuff in the doinin'-room."

The priest raised his hand in a dignified manner, but the gesture was accompanied by a smile, and Mrs. Murray replied with a wink:

"Ye've niver saw me hushband, have ye, Father?"

"Not this one."

"Oi must show 'im to ye. Ye'll scream whin ye see 'im. He's built loik a Spanish union, but he's not half bad whin ye know 'im."

After the groom had failed to answer the many numerous calls which Mrs. Murray made in a voice that was heard on the opposite side of the street, the guests became curious and Mrs. Murray grew quite excited. Each room and corner of the house was carefully searched and when she opened the closet door adjoining a small, rear room on the third floor and saw Wartle sitting in the corner, she stepped back, seated herself on the edge of the bed and shook with laughter.

"For the love of Hivin, will ye tell me what ye're doin' in there? Ye look loik a fudgitiv. Have ye done annything ye are ashamed of? Come out of there, ye poor divil, shure ye are meltin' wid the hate. Ye look loik a boiled lobshter. Come out, Oi tell ye."

She pulled him from the closet, took the handkerchief from his trembling hand, wiped

the perspiration from his face, pressed the corners of the sticking plaster into place and patted his shoulder gently.

"Cheer up, this is only the beginnin'—stick to me an' Oi'll see that no one hurts ye. Come on, Oi want to show ye to Father Gorman."

She clutched his wrist in her hand tightly and dragged him through the tittering crowd to the parlor.

"This is it!" were the words she used to present her future husband to Father Gorman, who controlled his smile and greeted the groom cordially and held his hand, while he assured him that there was no cause for fear.

"Is your friend here who is going to stand up with you?"

"Hi don't know," he mumbled. "Mrs. Murray said she 'ad 'ired some friend of 'ers to do that."

Mrs. Murray whispered to Father Gorman that the man was there, but she didn't think would stand well unless he was propped up with something. "Ye better come in an' take a peek at 'im before Oi wake 'im up."

She pushed her way through the crowd

hanging on to Wartle's wrist. They found Hannigan stretched across the bed snoring peacefully, with his whip gripped tightly in both hands.

"He's dead to the wurd, he ain't moved since Oi fetched 'im in here."

The priest shook his head sadly and murmured, "Too bad, too bad."

"His 'e hintoxicated?" Wartle asked innocently.

"No, ye rube, he's sea-sick from walkin' around the water fountain in Union Square!"

It was decided to let Hannigan sleep and have Sweeney act as best man.

"Hi wonder 'ow much Mr. Sweeney will charge hus, 'e his hawfully 'igh-priced with heverything hin 'is restaurant."

"If ye spake of money agin 'till after the weddin' is over Oi'll pull all the stickin' plasher off yer fat face!"

The situation was explained to Mr. Sweeney, who said he was sorry that he was not the first choice, but would do anything to start the wedding bells ringing.

After the ceremony, Sweeney called Mrs.

Wartle aside and informed her that there were a lot of "ringers in" present and wished to know who was to eat and who was not to eat.

"Fade thim all, fade iverybody, fade the ones out on the sidewalk, send over and git your restaurant, give everyone a plate wid somethin' on it and sind and git Hannigan's horse a bushel of oats and a bunch of hay—fade iverything that has a mouth on it!"

Her orders were obeyed to the letter and it wasn't long before everyone held a well-filled plate in their hand and Hannigan's horse had his face buried in a large bag of oats.

Wartle made several attempts to escape, but Mrs. Wartle held tight to his wrist and forced him to stand in the center of the room and receive the congratulations.

It was nearly midnight before Mr. Sweeney, who was the last guest to depart, made up his mind to leave.

"For Hivin sake, Sweeney, don't shake me hand, it's loik a Cannibul stake, it feels as if a shteam roller had run over it. Everybody has held it an' shook it an' squeezed it, 'till it's numb. Oi can't bind me fingers, but ye're a

King—an' sure the name ain't good enough fer ye. Sure ye spread a table here today that would make a King look loik a starvin' pup, an' I've aten 'till Oi can't walk. Shake this hand, but shake it loitly," and she presented Sweeney with her left hand.

After he had left Mr. and Mrs. Wartle stood at the bedside and listened to Hannigan snore for several minutes before deciding what method they would use to get him home without arousing his temper.

"Ye kape out of soight an' lave 'im to me. He'll be nutty whin he foinds out the widdin's all over an' he'd pick a scrap wid ye as soon as he saw yer face. Shtand out there in the hall an' Oi'll git 'im away somehow."

"I'm ready," Hannigan muttered after Mrs. Wartle had pulled at his ear for several seconds.

"Well, git up, thin, sure it's nearly twelve o'clock an' yer horse is ashlap on the soid-walk."

"Well, ain't there goin' to be no weddin'?"

"Sure the weddin's all over an' everybody is home an' in bed but you, an' the cop siz he'll

run yer horse in if ye don't kape him off the neighbor's front steps."

"Where is the horse now?" and he rubbed his eyes with his knuckles until he succeeded in getting one of them open.

"Yer horse is waitin' fer ye on the front shteps. He's tryin' to git in here to git to bid wid ye, Oi guess."

"And is the weddin' all over?"

"Sure it's all over. Don't ye remember what ye did?"

"Did I do anything?"

"Why, don't ye remember shtanding up wid Wartle?"

Hannigan rubbed his eyes again and smiled faintly.

"Oh, yes, I remember seein' him, but I don't remember the weddin', I just remember that face. It looked as if it had been tattooed with whitewash. I was paralyzed when I saw what ye had picked for a husband."

"Sure, ye were paralyzed long before ye saw him, but Oi guess the soight of Wartle put ye out entirely!"

"It was a knockout when I saw it. Did I stand up wid 'im all right?"

"Sure ye was foine. Father Gorman had hold of ye, but ye shtood up as straight as an arrow. Don't ye remember?"

"Yes, I remember everything now."

"It'll all come back to ye in a day or so. Come on now, go home an' git some shlapec."

She assisted him onto his cab and he drove away laughing to himself, "I'll never forgit that face."

"Hit won't take hus long to hexamine hour weddin' presents," Wartle remarked dryly, when Mrs. Murray returned to the room. "We had ha lot hof people but there his honly two presents."

"Sure that spoon is from Ann McCabe. Who is the other one from?"

"Hi don't know. Hi was hafraid to hopen hit until you came."

Mrs. Murray opened the small package and removed a quaint silver pitcher with a card tied to the handle bearing the name of "John Weatherbee."

"Hit his second 'anded, hisn't hit?" Wartle grunted.

"Oi don't care if it is, it was moighty shwell

of him to give it to us, and we didn't invoit 'im to the weddin'. It's one of thim antake things of his that he is so crazy about. Sure he has the pawn shop stuffed with these koind of things."

"Hi wonder 'ow 'e got this hout?"

"Oi don't know and Oi don't care. He was nice enough to give it to us an' it's none of our business how he got it. It's a little crame pitcher. Oi'll have the gairl clane up his room fer 'im tomorry. Go to bed now, sure Oi'm dead to the wurld and ye have to git up early in the mornin' and help the gairl clane up the house—it's a soight, it looks as if it was hit wid a cyclone."

Wartle started to remove his coat, but was instructed to keep it on until he reached his own room.

"Ye're to shlake in the back room, upstairs. Oi'll take this room. Tell the gairl not to wake me up 'till nine o'clock in the mornin'. Oi want ter git a good rist. Good noight and plisant drames."

She closed the door on the little fat figure and examined the pitcher carefully. "It's a rail antake," she said to herself as she noticed the figures engraved on the bottom, 1863.

CHAPTER XXI

THISBY made his usual four o'clock Sunday call at the Kent mansion and when the butler informed him that Miss Helen was resting, he handed the colored gentleman his hat and cane, lighted a cigarette, presented the burned end of the match to the bewildered servant and walked leisurely into the library.

It had taken Mrs. Kent and Rosamond some time to fully explain the importance of the present situation to Helen and convince her that it was not only wise, but absolutely necessary to let Mr. Kent and Jack have the entire house to themselves. It was not quite clear to her why they should occupy the entire establishment, but she was pleased to grant their request, so buried her undisturbed mind between the pages of an interesting book and refused to see anyone.

With the hat, cane and burned match in his hand, the butler stood in an amazed attitude mumbling over the orders he had received from Mrs. Kent and Rosamond.

"We can see no one. No matter who calls we are not at home."

"Those am the words an' they cer'nly meant 'em fo' they said 'em over an' over free times. I'll inform him jus' once mo' an' if he don' go I'll repo't the case to Mrs. Kent, and she'll sure 'nough take that young gen'man by the ear an' make him go home!"

When he reached the library door and found Thisby sprawled out on the divan reading a magazine and puffing clouds of cigarette smoke up at the ceiling, his courage weakened and he was unable to find words to express his thoughts.

After he had gazed at the picture for some few seconds, the magazine was lowered just enough to permit Thisby to throw a bored glance over the top of its pages.

"Do you wish anything, Joe?" and he arranged the pillows underneath his head and continued reading.

"Mis'er Thisby, the ladies lef' pa'tic'ler o'da's that they can see no one today."

"Don't bother about me, dear old boy. I'll just sort of kill time here 'till they come down

to dinner. Get me a glass of water, that's a dear old chap. Hurry now, I'm beastly thirsty. Run along now like a good fellow!"

The request was acknowledged by a polite bow, but the queer old feet shuffled their way to Mrs. Kent's door and when she saw the black figure standing before her with a straw hat in one hand and a cane in the other, she pronounced the guest's name before it was announced.

"Mass Kent, I tol' 'em an' tol' 'em that he couldn't see anyone, but he jus' walk right in an' lay 's'sef right down on the divan in the library."

"I'll see him, Joe." Her quiet dignified tone assured the servant that he had nothing to do but wait at the door and hand the gentleman his hat and cane.

Thisby jumped to his feet and extended his hand when Mrs. Kent entered the room and she received it in both of hers and patted it gently.

"Helen is resting, my dear, and she can't see you this afternoon."

"But, bless you, I am going to be a good

sort and wait here until she comes down to dinner. I don't mind it a bit, don't you know."

"No, you run home and if Mr. Kent goes to his office tomorrow, you may come over then. You do this for me. Mr. Kent is entertaining a guest today and we want him to have the house to himself," and he was coaxed to the front door with Mrs. Kent's arm about his shoulders, assisting him each step of the way.

"Why doesn't the Governor take his guests to his club and entertain them? The idea of wanting a whole house to himself just to chatter about a lot of stocks and such truck and having other people get off the earth, so to speak. It's an awful bore—really it is, don't you know! My dear Mrs. Kent, you have my hat on wrong end to. Please allow me to put on my own hat—and please, Joe, you silly ass, don't stick that cane in my face. I've never been treated so rudely as this in all my life—it's anything but civil, and I shall tell mother about it at once!"

Joe chuckled to himself as he watched the small figure hasten down the steps. "He am cer'nly the mos' nervy pusion that ever called at a house wifout a gun."

Though Rosamond spent most of the afternoon gazing out through the window of her room, her mind was far from the moving panorama on the street below. The hundreds of automobiles passing in either direction and the tooting of their horns claimed no part of her attention. Her elbow rested on the arm of the chair, her flushed cheek lay in her hand and the big, soft eyes stared at Weatherbee's tall figure as she left it standing in the center of the little room when she hurried down the stairs with Jack in her arms.

She had met him three times and she possessed a mental photograph of each meeting and they were before her constantly, they stood directly in front of anything she attempted to look at. A feeble smile lingered about her lips as she closed her eyes and listened to his description of himself when he posed as Mr. Weatherbee's secretary, but the smile darted away and left the lips trembling when she saw him in her father's presence and heard him measure each word in a low dignified tone say, "I am Mr. Weatherbee." She viewed each photograph over and over and unconsciously

whispered through the lines of his poem. She formed an imaginary picture of his life in the little garret room with Jack. She saw him sewing the clumsy patches on the child's gingham dress while it dreamed its infant dreams on the tiny bed-couch. She saw him bend over the rough wooden table by a small lamp writing the poem that she was whispering to herself. She thought of the tomorrow and of their meeting; she pictured their visit to the lonely grave of her sister. The words of the poem left her lips and they trembled as her long, dark lashes were slowly lowered into the tears that filled her eyes. Her mind traveled swiftly from one scene to the other and while her heart was cheering the noble character of the man who had cared for the lost one and her baby, he was passing her window on the top of a Fifth Avenue bus.

The noisy vehicle hadn't rattled its way far up the crowded street before Kent's big French motor rolled up to the door. She grew frightened when she caught a glimpse of her father gathering the little bundle in his arms as if it were glass, and she rushed out of the room and

was at the front door in time to open it and inquire if the child was ill.

"No, the little rascal is sleeping," Kent whispered and he tiptoed into the library and took particular pains to lay the little figure in a position to prevent the light from striking his eyes.

To hear her father lower his heavy voice to a whisper was such a surprise to Rosamond that she stood at the door somewhat dazed. She watched him touch the toes of his shoes to the floor and tried to remember if she had ever seen him walk as gently before. She had never heard him whisper before. The heavy voice was never pitched in a gentle key for anyone's ear, and the thick soles of his shoes had never touched ground ahead of the heels before.

Her surprise was many times multiplied when she peeked into the library and saw him unlacing the little worn shoes with the hope of making the child's dream more peaceful.

Her attempt to enter the room and become a third party was a failure, for as soon as her father saw her, he ordered her away by waving his hand quickly and making a face that no

one would dare approach, so she obeyed the signal, departed quietly, hastened up the stairs and gave her mother a detailed description of what she had seen.

While the child slumbered, Kent moved about the room noiselessly. He stepped into the drawing room to light his cigar to prevent the sound of the exploding match from waking the youngster. The scratching of a match had been carefully avoided in the child's presence, but his constant association with cigars made him forget that the odor of the smoke might prove objectionable to some people. Jack had grown up with a pipe, but he was not accustomed to strong, expensive cigars.

Kent closed the door gently, drew a large chair close to the divan, counted the curls, studied the delicacy of the little features and hurled clouds of smoke at the ceiling. After he had succeeded in completely filling the room, Jack acknowledged the fact by coughing boisterously and fanning the smoke from his face with his tiny hands. After he had sniffed

and fanned several seconds, Kent realized that the room was a solid cloud of smoke. The door and windows were quickly opened.

Jack raised himself to a sitting position, sniffed a few times and appeared to be greatly amused.

"That must be the kind of vegetable that dad says always smells while it is being cooked."

"Does your dad smoke cigars?"

"No, he can't afford to smoke cigars. He has to smoke a pipe."

"Do you like the odor of a pipe better than you do a cigar?"

"Yes, I like the odor of dad's pipe, but I don't like Mr. Wartle's pipe—it smells dreadfully. It is nearly as bad as your cigar."

The innocent frankness pleased Kent greatly and he smiled pleasantly when he thought of a thirty-five cent cigar being referred to as a vegetable.

"You think pretty well of your dad, don't you?"

"Yes sir," was the prompt reply. "I love

dad better than all of the whole world put together over and over and over and over."

"Well, don't you like me?"

"Yes, I like you a lot."

"Why do you like me? Because I gave you an automobile ride?"

"Maybe."

"Well, why do you like your dad? He hasn't any automobile."

"No, but he rides me on his back."

"Yes, but that isn't as nice as riding in an automobile, is it?"

"Yes, it is. I would rather ride on my dad's back than in your automobile."

"Would you rather live in the little room away upstairs with your dad than live here with me and ride in my automobile?"

"Yes, I'd rather live any place with dad than live any place without him."

"Wouldn't you like to live here and have Mrs. Kent for your mamma?"

"No."

"I could ride you on my back."

"Yes, but you wouldn't be dad."

Kent pushed his hands into the pockets of

his trousers, walked to the window and stood chewing the end of his cigar, repeating to himself the words of the child's last speech: "Yes, but you wouldn't be dad!" The man with the iron will, who controlled millions of dollars and referred to as the man who held Wall Street under his thumb, the man who had never known defeat, stood with an aching heart begging for the love of an infant who sat before him in a little patched gingham dress, innocently defying all his wealth and power. He stared through the window and the glass seemed to magnify the picture he had dreamed of for so many years—one that he had ceased hoping for—one that his millions couldn't buy—a boy—just a baby boy. The sharp, keen eyes softened as they gazed blankly up at the blue sky, and they closed when imagination forced them to believe they saw the face of the baby's mother passing before them draped in a pale blue cloud. The cigar fell from the heavy lips unnoticed and the broad shoulders were drawn nearer the ears than they had ever been before.

Jack sat quietly through the long silence un-

til he saw the burning cigar fall to the floor. "Here is your cigar," and he held it before Kent, but he made no attempt to take it and Jack tugged playfully at his big hand until he drew it from the trouser pocket and he placed it between the first and second finger, and Kent smiled faintly and watched him trying to push the heavy hand up to his face, but the cigar didn't reach his lips; he tossed it into the ash receiver and took Jack on his knee and wound the curls about his finger.

"Why did you throw that big cigar away? There was a lot there to smoke yet."

"I don't want to smoke, I would rather visit with you."

"Why did you let your cigar fall on the floor?"

"I don't know—I guess I was dreaming."

"People can't dream when they're standing up wide awake."

"Yes, they can, that is what they call 'day dreaming.' "

"What were you dreaming?"

"I was dreaming of something I have never had—I was dreaming—I was dreaming of a

little boy like you." He pressed the curly head to his breast and meant to pat it gently, but Jack squinted each time the large hand touched him.

"Do you know what I would do if I had a bright little boy like you?"

"No."

"Well, I would send him away to school and after he graduated I would teach him to run my business and I would give him a half interest in it, and he and I would be partners—partners for life! Don't you think that would be fun?"

The reply was a long silence and he rambled on painting the picture he was mapping out in his own mind for the lad he was rocking to and fro on his knee. He had unconsciously softened his touch and when he peeked under his hand, the big blue eyes were closed and he was dreaming of another picture—his—picture—the picture that was painted on the memory of childhood—his dad—the little garret room—the cat—the picture book—and the broken rocking horse.

CHAPTER XXII

JACK was tucked away on the divan and slept quietly, while Kent paced softly from the closed door to the window, stopping each time he passed the tiny figure to gaze down into the face that seemed to him like a living shadow of the one he saw veiled in the blue cloud. He repeated to himself each word the child had uttered regarding his dad. "Dad rides me on his back," he whispered, and he shook his head in admiration for the little man who had unconsciously displayed the sincerity of his great love for the only father he had ever known. "Yes, but you wouldn't be dad," he thoughtlessly muttered aloud while he sauntered to the window, but he stared at the floor, he didn't look up, he didn't look out of the window.

He sank in his office chair, leaned his elbows on the desk and rested his head on his hands, "He's full of red blood—he's a soldier—he's made of steel—he'd break before he'd bend." He tried to banish the note of jealousy he felt tingling through his mind, when he saw the

one thing he wanted to possess clinging to another. He sketched his home in the garret, but it was a palace in comparison to the little room in which the child had spent its life.

He thought of the opportunities he could place before the child, of the opportunities he would place before him if he could persuade him to accept them. Jack's politeness, his perfect manners, his humor and wonderful wisdom told of his careful training and had forced Kent to respect Weatherbee, though in his heart he envied him. He begrudged him the love that was buried in the baby dozing on the divan. He wondered why that love hadn't been given to him, and after he had studied over the situation a short time he realized that he had cruelly pushed and kicked it away. "But I'll get it—I'll earn it," he growled and he swung the big chair around quickly and stared at the little figure and sighed—"You are my boy—my blood flows in your veins. You are my boy—my boy. Your father is dead—your mother is dead. I'll make you love me. I'll make you rich—I'll make you my son."

Richard Kent never started on a journey

until he had carefully laid out his route, and when he started he had never been known to turn back until the end was reached. His keen eye saw at once that he was not facing a business proposition—it was different from anything he had ever come in contact with and it would have to be treated differently. The possession of the child would have to be gained with affection. He knew from his short acquaintance with Weatherbee that money would be of no use. “It’s a problem,” he whispered, “but I’ll work it out!”

Jack’s nap was interrupted by Rosamond, who took possession of him long enough to sponge the little face and hands, arrange the curls and prepare him for dinner, during which few words were spoken. Rosamond broke the monotonous silence on two occasions by asking Jack if he had a nice nap, but he always answered the time-worn question with the same words.

“I don’t know, I can never tell how I sleep after I go to sleep because I don’t know anything until I wake up.”

The reply brought a smile to Kent's face each time, though he didn't enter into the conversation. He excused himself long before the others had finished and paused at the door just long enough to request Rosamond to step into the library before she retired.

She found it quite necessary to do considerable coaxing before she succeeded to get Jack to don Helen's night dress.

"I know it's a girl's night-gown. I can tell by the ribbons and all this knitting around the neck."

She assured him the knitting was lace, but he informed her that knitting and lace were just the same, only lace was made of thread instead of yarn.

"They never put knitting or lace on a man's night-gown. This is just like the ones they have on the girl dolls in the store windows!"

"Well, you wear this tonight and I'll get you some nice pajamas tomorrow."

"With pockets in them?"

"Yes, with great large pockets in them."

The promise sent him to bed cheerfully, and

while he was repeating the Lord's prayer, he stopped to decide on the color.

"May I have blue ones?"

"You may have any color you want."

"I like blue best—where did I leave off?"

"Perhaps you had better start from the beginning."

"No, it takes too long. I know where it was."

He omitted a few sentences, but the mistake was an unconscious one and was excused by Rosamond, who was quite busy concealing her laughter. The long ride in the auto had made him unusually sleepy and the "Amen" was spoken with a yawn and the curly head had scarcely struck the pillow before he was fast asleep. Rosamond, who was always eager to obey her father's request, went to the library at once.

He explained the object of the meeting immediately. He sat at his desk fumbling with a few pieces of paper and without facing her or raising his head, asked her how she happened to meet Weatherbee. The question proved an embarrassing one, but she had always an-

swered any question he had ever asked her and she had never told him a falsehood, so, in a few words as possible, she related the entire story including her engagement with him on the following day.

He listened silently with his head bent over the desk clinching one hand in the other when he heard of Marguerite's death and how she had been buried by the man he had ordered from his house. The tears fell from his eyes onto his clinched hands and he made no attempt to stop them, for each tear that fell seemed to relieve the swelling in his breast. With his unsteady hand he wrote Weatherbee's address on the paper wet with his own tears. "That is all, my dear. Leave me now, I want to think. Good-night." She bade him good night and left the heavy figure crouched over the desk sobbing like a child.

She left the room bewildered. Her mind seemed to swim. She was unable to understand her father's attitude. She had seen him cry for the first time in her life. Her sister's name had not been mentioned in his presence for years. He had ordered her photograph to

be destroyed or taken away. The one which held a place on his desk he had torn to pieces and thrown into the waste basket and now the sound of her name brought the heavy bellowing voice to a sympathetic whisper and the strong, rigid figure withered and shrunk before the story of her death as a pansy shrinks and withers in a hail storm.

She sat on the arm of a large chair in the drawing room and tried to form some idea of his intentions, but she was unable to fathom the depths of his silence. She went to the library expecting a prolonged conversation about Jack, but his name had not been mentioned. She reviewed his questions and found he had talked of no one but Weatherbee. She hadn't noticed him make a written memorandum of his address and she found it impossible to foresee even a faint shadow of his plan.

Kent glanced at the slip of paper containing the Twenty-ninth Street number, pushed it into the upper pocket of his waistcoat, filled his cigar case with fresh cigars and ordered the servant to bring him his hat.

"Shall I o'da de mota, sah?"

"No, Joe. I am not going far and I want to walk."

"Yas'ah."

The black derby hat was pulled down over the left eye, the long cigar squeezed tightly between the heavy lips, the large head hung as if the eyes were studying something on the floor and the hands were crowded far down into the pockets of his trousers. He did not see Rosamond seated in the large chair and her soft voice startled him when she asked where he was going.

"Just for a little walk," he replied with a heavy sigh. "Just for a little walk."

He stood on the steps wondering if the man whom he had ordered from his house would allow him to enter his small room in the garret. "I'll give him the opportunity, anyway," he muttered to himself. "It's a funny world," he thought while he hastened along Fifth Avenue.

He stopped at the salutation of the first beggar and gave him the first coin his fingers touched and he held another in his hand ready to grant the next request. He had been a resident of Fifth Avenue for many years, though

the sidewalk and his feet were strangers. Memory couldn't recall the time when he had sauntered along the street before.

There were few people in sight and only now and then a poor devil appeared in a dark shadow between the lights to ask for the price of a night's lodging and none were refused. The importance of Wall Street and all of its associates were forgotten. "Dick" Kent was as near nature as the thick stone walks would permit anyone to get, but the large slabs seemed friendly, the night air seemed soft and soothing and the stars twinkled as if they were trying to outshine the artificial lights that were buzzing and struggling beneath them.

The night acted strangely to him, but it was in its usual mind and behaving perfectly, but his eyes had never viewed it from a quiet street at that hour before. He was the stranger, but he was not aware of the fact. Something had broken through the callous which business had wrapped around his heart—something had touched it. The patched gingham dress, the curls and the big, blue eyes had brought him down from the high wind where he had been

soaring above humanity. They sent tears through the cold, keen eyes, they had swept the thought of money out of a mind that was so relieved by its absence that it couldn't account for his feeling. He had touched earth and the sensation puzzled him. He was ready to shake hands with the world, yet he was unable to understand why he was happy.

When he reached the steps of Wartle's house, the Sweeney boys were removing the dishes and informed him that he was too late.

"The at'n's over, but Oi'll stake ye to a cigar," and he offered him one of the "Sweeney Perfectos," which he accepted with a gracious smile.

"Does Mr. Weatherbee live here?"

"Oi dunno, they'll tell ye insoid."

None of the guests were acquainted with Weatherbee, so Mrs. Wartle was called and directed him to "kape goin' up 'til his head hit the roof."

He thanked her for her kind information, searched his way to the top step of the squeaking stairs, removed his hat and in a low, firm tone announced himself to John Weatherbee,

who was seated at the rough wooden table pondering over one of his manuscripts by the light of a small lamp.

When he saw Kent standing with his hat in one hand, clinging to the rickety banister with the other and gasping for breath, he was not only surprised, but greatly amused. His humorous chord was immediately touched by the situation. There was no desire on his part to be discourteous, but Kent was allowed to stand at the banister while he unconsciously pushed his chair back from the table and wondered to himself if the gruff, surly gentleman had come to take his life for entering his palace, or to report his actions to the real Mr. Weatherbee.

When he became conscious that he had not asked the visitor to be seated, he apologized and begged him to accept the broken rocker, which was the best he had to offer. After climbing four flights of stairs, the offer was accepted with thanks, the heavy figure was squeezed between the arms and it squeaked tunefully.

Kent's attitude had changed so completely

that Weatherbee could scarcely believe he was in the presence of the man who appeared so arrogant a few days ago. The harsh voice that had growled and snapped at him was soft, sincere and friendly. He moved gently and quietly; there was an atmosphere of friendliness which surrounded his character that astonished Weatherbee, though he remained cool and humorously calculating. He resumed his seat behind the table and pushed the manuscript aside, turned the wick in the sputtering lamp a trifle higher, looked Kent straight in the eye and waited for him to explain his unexpected visit. A short silence followed, and each man riveted a friendly glance on the other as if it were a game of checkers, but it was Kent's move and Weatherbee sat calmly and held his eye until he spoke.

"No doubt you are wondering why I am here."

"Well, to be truthful, I wasn't expecting you."

"Well, I thought I wouldn't inform you that I was coming for fear I might not catch you in."

"That precaution wasn't necessary, Mr. Kent. I am always in to anyone who calls on me and I am not kept very busy receiving."

"You're lucky."

"That greatly depends upon the person who calls."

"There aren't many people who will climb to the garret to shake an empty hand, are there?"

The question was asked in a tone that was friendly and it drove the shadow of a faint smile to one corner of Weatherbee's mouth.

"Well, we haven't room for very many up here, and the few chairs you see seat all who call."

"Mr. Weatherbee, my daughter has told me of her acquaintance with you—how she met you—of Jack—the death of his mother—the way you cared for her during her illness and after her death. That is why I am here. I am not capable of expressing my gratitude and I know there is nothing I have or can do that would even begin to repay you for what you have done. But you are repaid—there are no numbers that can tell you how many times you are repaid, there is no form or quantity of

wealth that can buy what you possess, or take it away from you. You can buy bodies and promises and lock them up and watch them, but you can't buy a child's first love—you have got to earn it. You have earned it and I can't buy it. If I could, I'd give you all I have for it. I can't steal it—if I could, I'd steal it, but I can't. I can't even lay my finger on it—I can't even touch it. What is your reward is a living, breathing monument that circumstances have put in my lap to remind me of my cruel, stubborn mistake, and while I rocked it on my knee and tried to steal its little mind away from you with automobiles and horses and promises, he told me that he would rather ride on your back than in my automobiles. I told him that I would ride him on my back and he said, 'Yes, but you wouldn't be dad,' and for the first time during the fifty-five years of my life I realized that there was something that couldn't be bought with money. It's a great pleasure to me to have an opportunity to tell you what you possess. It's the first time in my life that I have ever lost control of my tongue, but you have let me in, my mouth is open and I've got

to talk. Every man who goes through life must stumble and fall before he learns to walk carefully. I stumbled, fell and got hurt. I yelled when I should have whispered. I punched with my fist when I should have petted with my fingers. I used my foot when I should have used my heart. You have brought me face to face with my mistake and I want to do something to pay for my error—I want that boy!”

Weatherbee was quite prepared for the demand. A lonesome night and a more lonesome Sunday had given him sufficient time to study the situation over and over. He had done so and fully realized that nature would have its way; that blood would claim its own. He had become reconciled to the fact that the little arms had been unwound from about his neck forever and would soon learn to twine themselves about another and he wondered if the busy little mind would forget him, or if it would ever think of the lessons taught it at the tiny window in the garret while it was playing on the costly rugs in the Fifth Avenue mansion. His generous heart made him deeply

grateful for the future he saw before Jack, and he despised himself each time he wished him back.

The four words that Kent used to make his request were uttered in a low, firm, pleading tone. He was positive in his own mind that Weatherbee would refuse to grant his request and was prepared for a friendly argument and, if necessary, a legal fight. He studied his face during the short silence; he watched the blood leave his cheeks, the color return, the sad eye melt into a soft sympathetic twinkle, and his own cheeks became swollen with astonishment when Weatherbee replied quietly: "You have him, haven't you?"

"Perhaps you don't understand me. I wish to adopt him."

"I understand you perfectly. You are only asking for what I would ask were I in your place."

He uttered each word distinctly, but he was unable to control his voice. It trembled in spite of the effort he was making to smile as he said good-bye to the one link in life that made it worth living.

The sympathetic tones of his voice melted their way through Kent's ears and landed on his heart like lumps of lead. He watched the lips quiver and try to smile as they were framing their words. He saw the muscles of the face twitch and jerk and the trembling fingers wander to the lamp and turn its small blaze higher. He jumped to his feet, reached across the rough wooden table and yelled, "By —— —— Weatherbee, I'd consider it an honor to shake your hand!"

CHAPTER XXIII

KENT'S enthusiasm over what he considered a victory was for a time suppressed by astonishment at the quiet friendly way Weatherbee had surrendered to his wish. He entered the room expecting to be received as he had received the man whom he was calling on, but Weatherbee's politeness staggered him, his broad-minded views puzzled him—he had jumped from the curbstone to a pedestal. Kent grunted, stuttered and struggled for words that might express his gratitude, but he found it impossible, so he clung to Weatherbee's hand and shook it until his arm was tired, then hurried away leaving him seated at the table, by the flickering lamp staring blankly at the rough wooden table.

Weatherbee's broad mind soon made the sad eyes twinkle and the quivering lips smile. He glanced at Jack's future and saw his walk through life paved with comfort and happiness instead of the worries and struggles that lay along the narrow path where his hand

would have led him. His sad thoughts changed to happy ones, his loneliness was surrounded by mental drawings of Jack, he watched each year enlarge the imaginary sketch until the tiny tot stood before him as a man. He stuffed his pipe, lighted it and blew a peaceful ring of smoke at the painting.

The drawing room was lighted by one bulb that threw a soft glow over the room that resembled the last shadow of a fading sunset. Rosamond sat in the large chair during her father's absence and thought of his strange attitude until she worried herself into a troubled doze. The slamming of the door frightened her and she rose to her feet in utter astonishment as she listened to him humming a tuneless air to himself as he sauntered through the room into the library. His eyes were dancing when they saw her appear at the door. To her great surprise she was invited to enter, urged to accept a seat and informed of his visit to Weatherbee.

"That man is all white, with a mind as broad as the ocean and as clear as crystal—he's a mountain of honor—a gentleman—I wish I

could do something for that fellow, but there is nothing you can do for a man of his type but tip your hat to him."

She sat spellbound while she listened to him roar in admiration for the man whom she had spent the day dreaming of, wondering if she was over-estimating the character that stood before her as a living statue of nobleness, the smile that seemed like no other smile she had ever seen, the low gentle voice that sounded like a human note she had never heard.

Kent only paused long enough to get his breath and announced his plans regarding Jack. "The first thing to do is to get him some clothes. You don't know anything about what a boy should wear, though, so I'll attend to that myself. I'll take him after breakfast and get the clothes, and he's got to have some things to play with—there's nothing up in that nursery but girl's toys. He won't play with those foolish things, but I'll get those myself, you don't know anything about those. You just have everything taken right out of that nursery and I'll fit it up for him. I'll attend to that myself. I'll have a trapeze put up there

and one of those electric saddle horses and soldiers, fire-wagons and a menagerie—big toy animals and things of that sort. I'll have a man come and fit it up. You can't expect a boy that is a boy to sit around and play with his thumbs. Why, it's foolish to think of such a thing. Boys who are educated to do those things grow up and develop into lace handkerchiefs like 'Thisby.'

Rosamond made no attempt to offer any suggestions, for she fully realized how useless it would be, so she listened with a great deal of amusement to his excited conversation that was developing into a heated argument with himself.

"We've got to get a governess at once, but it is too late to see about that tonight. I'll attend to that myself tomorrow. I want an American governess with an American head on her, who knows something about America and can talk about it and teach a child something about it. This idea of putting an American child in the hands of a French governess and teaching it a foreign language before it can say 'thank you' in its own tongue is an insult to our country.

Thisby is a specimen for you. He broke in here one day and wanted me to decide a bet for him. He was betting with Helen that Abe Lincoln was a Russian. I guess I'll have some men come up here and take Jack's measurement and have a lot of clothes, hats and shoes and things sent here. It will be much easier to try them on that way—but I'll attend to that. Don't you bother about anything. I won't go to the office tomorrow. I'll stay right here and arrange everything. You see, my dear, you or your mother have never been associated with boys, and it is only natural that you don't understand them. Boys are much different from girls and must be cared for differently. I'll teach you just what to do and make it very easy for you when I am at the office."

She was taken by the hand, led to the door, patted gently on the shoulder and ordered to bed as if she were four years of age. She answered the order with a smile and went to her room dreaming of the tomorrow.

Monday proved an unusually busy day for everyone. Weatherbee was at the bank before its doors were opened and was compelled to

get one of the publishers to identify him before he succeeded in getting his check cashed. After each creditor was paid in full, the pawnbroker was greeted with a broad smile and a cordial shake of the hand. "I have come to rent my clothes of you for awhile," he said casually.

Both arms were filled with as many clothes as he could carry and after several trips were made his belongings were scattered about the garret room. A bluish-gray summer suit, hosiery of the same color, low tan shoes, a dark blue tie and a white straw hat were chosen. The barber was visited for the first time in many weeks, the manicure was requested to hurry, his watch was put to work and when he was dismissed from the chair he had forty minutes before his appointment with Rosamond Kent. A slight gnawing of his stomach reminded him that he had not breakfasted, but a cup of coffee and a slice of toast made peace with the inner man and he sauntered leisurely toward the Kent mansion.

"Who's there?" Mrs. Wartle yelled after the French maid had pounded at her door for several minutes.

"'Tees I."

"Well, who are ye?"

"'E mait."

"Pfhat?"

"'E mait—mait—mait."

"Well, kim in."

She raised herself to a sitting position and stared at the frightened maid when she entered.

"Fer Hivin's sake, was that you bangin' at the dure? I thought it was Hannigan's horse. Pfhat toime is it?"

After numerous attempts to inform her that it was nearly nine o'clock, she held up as many fingers for Mrs. Wartle to count.

"Pfhat's the matter wid yer tongue, it sounds as if it had feathers on it? I say pfhat's the matter wid yer tongue—tongue—tongue?" she yelled, and the maid immediately showed as much of her tongue as nature would permit. Mrs. Wartle shrieked as she fell back on the pillow and covered her face with her hands.

Wartle, who had been paroling up and down

the hall for some time, rushed into the room. "His hanything the matter?" he exclaimed in a frightened voice.

"Is annything the matter? Where did ye pull her out of? Shure she's worse than a Chinaman. Ye can't understand a word she siz. Make her git me a cup of coffee, some bread and butter and some ham and eggs and tell her to flop the eggs. Oi want thim froid on both soids."

Wartle saw that her instructions were carried out. The bride's first breakfast was served in bed, and the maid was pronounced "a foin cook." Wartle kept her company by sitting on the edge of the bed and when he informed her that Weatherbee had left the money he owed her with him, she thanked him by saying, "Well, where is it?"

"Hi put hit hin with mine."

"Did he pay you?"

"Yes, 'e paid heverything."

"Well, put it all on the wash-stand there an' Oi'll take care of it whin Oi aroise!"

His hesitation brought forth the second request in a firmer voice, and the money was placed on the stand.

"Take these dishes now an' git out of here. Oi must git up. Oi'll have a hidache if Oi lay here anny longer. It must be tin o'clock."

The dishes were carried away and she arose humming "Kathleen Mavourneen" while Wartle pressed his ear to the door and smiled with pride, whispering, "She his ha queen, han Hirish queen."

* * * * *

While Mrs. Wartle sat in her bed propped up by pillows enjoying her first breakfast in her new home, Weatherbee was hurrying from one creditor to the other paying his debts, and "Dick" Kent was busy at the telephone engaging representatives from the best clothing houses of New York City to come and take Jack's measurement and by ten o'clock the large drawing-room was completely littered with suits, hats, shoes, stockings, shirtwaists, automobile coats and gloves, sent on approval.

The library was used as a dressing-room. Kent requested the ladies to keep out. "It's my duty to attend to this, my dears, because you don't understand what a boy needs to

wear," and the fussy, growling tone of his voice resembled that of a spoiled child. An amused glance was passed from one lady to the other as they filed out of the library and left what they considered the big baby and the little man to play with the new toys.

Rosamond was extremely anxious to select Jack's first suit and present him to Weatherbee as she wished to see him dressed, but her plans were shattered, though she was intensely amused with her father, who had assumed the attitude of a proud boy with a new red wagon. She had planned many pretty little suits for Jack and had unconsciously asked herself if they would please Mr. Weatherbee. She was not aware of the fact, but his taste was being carefully considered, and his judgment somewhat feared. She stood before the long mirror in her tailor-made suit of white serge and wondered if he liked white. She found a tiny soiled spot on the rim of her white sailor hat and ordered the maid to bring another at once. The white gloves were thoroughly examined and Weatherbee was only forgotten for a second, now and then, when the sad object of their meeting robbed him of her thoughts.

If the maid had dared to ask her why she stood at the window staring down the walk toward Twenty-ninth Street as if she expected the earth to open its jaws and deliver some unheard-of-curiosity, she might have realized that she was waiting, but the well-trained maid controlled her curiosity and remained silent, but watched her with as much anxiety while she watched for the first man who had ever kept her waiting and for the first time she was dressed and waiting many minutes before the appointed time.

Weatherbee's tall figure was not recognized in his new attire until he was seen mounting the steps, and much to his surprise Rosamond was in the reception hall to greet him when he entered. Without thought or hesitation, she reached for his hand, clasped it firmly and gave it a cordial shake and the greeting was deeply appreciated, though he had entirely forgotten his first reception. He had trained his mind to dwell on pleasant thoughts and he seldom broke the rule, but when Rosamond placed her finger to her lips and whispered a long drawn out "hush" an unpleasant thought shot

through his mind; he wondered if Kent had turned tiger and was going to slay him on sight, but the idea was quickly dismissed when she made a peek-hole by separating a small portion of the portieres and showed him the drawing-room that resembled a child's clothing store.

"It's too funny for anything," she continued softly, "he has three men in the library trying on clothes for Jack, and he won't allow mother or anyone to even go into the room—he's like a child."

"It looks like a sample room," Weatherbee replied after he surveyed the room and saw each piece of furniture decorated with several suits of clothes.

Though the scene amused him greatly, his line of thought was quickly broken. The costly garments announced the exit of the gingham dress and there was a swelling in his throat when he saw it thrown with the rags. "I would like to keep it," he thought to himself, "and in years to come show it to the man who may forget me," and he stood peeking through the tiny hole until Rosamond asked,

“Shall we start?” He apologized for what he referred to as stupidity;—they entered the large automobile and Rosamond instructed the chauffeur to follow Mr. Weatherbee’s directions.

CHAPTER XXIV

WEATHERBEE'S limited association with automobiles had not enabled him to become familiar with their fixtures and he was not aware that hanging at his side was a speaking tube for the sole purpose of conversing with the chauffeur, so he leaned forward and gave him the address of a small flower shop on Twenty-ninth Street and requested him to stop there first. The big car dodged its way along between the numerous vehicles on the crowded avenue and drew up in front of the little store.

Weatherbee begged to be excused, promising to be gone but a moment, and kept his promise, for the small bunch of sweet peas which he had ordered and paid for early that morning was ready and presented to him when he reached the door by the clerk who saw him alight from the automobile.

The sight of the simple flowers brought a sudden blush to Rosamond's cheeks, for in her excitement the thought of flowers had slipped

her mind, but her embarrassment was not noticed, for she leaned forward as she had seen Weatherbee do and ordered the chauffeur to stop at her florist's, and the next stop was made in front of one of the largest and most expensive flower stores on Fifth Avenue. At this store her appearance always meant the sale of the most costly flowers, which she preferred to purchase rather than cut the ones growing in the conservatory at her own home.

The clerk's surprise was quite noticeable when she informed him that she wanted a small bunch of lily-of-the-valley. He leaned heavily on his persuasive powers and tried hard to influence her to look at the American Beauties, repeating that they were exquisitely beautiful that morning, but she refused to even see them.

"I just want a small bunch of lily-of-the-valley." She was deeply impressed by the simplicity of the sweet peas which Weatherbee held in his hand when he came from the tiny store and stepped into the automobile. In her eyes the small bunch made their little leaves look so big, and their simplicity augmented

Weatherbee's dignity and there was still a much deeper thought in her mind, a thought that displayed the consideration and sweetness of her character. She was eager to secure something as inexpensive as the sweet peas, not only to show her appreciation of his delicate selection, but prevent showing any sign of financial display in fear of hurting his feelings, or making him conscious of his limited means, which she was fully aware of. Her success was complete, her choice not only delighted him, but greatly surprised him, for a glance at the store suggested most anything but a small bunch of lily-of-the-valley. He expected to see the large car loaded with magnificent flowers of all descriptions that would make his humble little cluster of peas fade into the background, but he was pleasantly disappointed, and the broad smile which crept over his face was quickly noticed by Rosamond when she stepped into the car.

"Are you fond of lilies-of-the-valley?" she asked eagerly.

"Very," he answered softly, and continued in a still softer tone after a short silence. "I

am fond of all flowers, but I dare say that lily-of-the-valley is my favorite one.”

His short acquaintance with the rules of motoring were again noticeable, for they sat some time before he came to, and realized the driver was waiting for his instructions. He was not familiar with any of the automobile routes in and about New York, but he bent forward and told the driver where they wished to go, but instructions regarding the way to get there were not necessary. The boy touched his hat with a jerk—he knew the way too well—he could have gone there with his eyes closed, for his mother lay but a few yards from his employer’s daughter.

Had it not been for the New York motor laws, the trip would have been made in silence, but the laws brought a mechanical grunt from the horn at each crossing, but no words were exchanged. Each understood and seemed grateful for the other’s silence, though each was trying to guess the other’s thoughts, but the mind in the front seat was the most puzzled of all.

“Doubtless one of the charity babies has

been buried there and she is going to visit its grave. What other reason could she have for going to such a humble graveyard?"

The large car quietly hummed its way along until it rolled up before the entrance and faced the huge sign "No Automobiles Allowed." Weatherbee stepped from the car and gracefully assisted Miss Rosamond to the ground.

A small bird perched on the point of one of the black iron pickets of the large open gates twittered a friendly welcome and broke the silence as they sauntered through the marble archway.

Weatherbee was familiar with every nook and corner and chose the path which took them between the massive trees with their long drooping branches swaying the green leaves to and fro over the lonely white headstones beneath them. Each tree seemed to possess an army of birds—some chirruped softly as if to themselves—some singing as if they were testing their little lungs, while others sputtered and squabbled and jawed as if they were battling with the world at large.

The path, the trees, the birds, everything

was new to Rosamond. It was a world she had never visited—a world she had never seen—perhaps one she had never even thought of, but a world that Weatherbee was fond of. He often went there and sat beneath the trees and studied the characteristics of the different people who came with their humble flowery offerings and wept over the graves of their loved ones. He considered it one of nature's greatest books to study humanity from, and while they were drifting along the narrowing path leading to the topmost hill of the grounds, he was making a careful study of his companion, though she was not aware of the fact. Her silence was marked and appreciated—her unconscious sighs were counted and the expression of her soft brown eyes was carefully watched as they wandered from one lonely plot to another.

When they reached the hilltop, the cinder path narrowed into one where few feet had traveled and was marked by bent grass and weeds leading to a new portion of the cemetery on the side of the hill which was treeless and barren. There were no marble slabs to mark

the lonely graves, only an earthen pot or a broken glass appeared here and there with a few withered flowers hanging over their edges.

When Rosamond's eye fell on the scene, she unconsciously hesitated, but only for a second, just long enough to close her eyes, press her lower lip between her teeth and restore her courage.

Weatherbee led the way down the dry grassy path and stopped just before he reached the foot of the hill and stood before a mound that was some distance from the others. A small earthen pot lay on its side at the head of the grave. At the foot of the grave there was a root of green ivy with two tiny vines which were smuggling their way along through the grass as if to greet the empty pot lying at the other end. The grass was short and green and showed signs of care and cultivation and in appearance was quite different from the other graves in that part of the cemetery. The birds were still busy in the trees at the top of the long hill, but the distance was too great for their little voices to carry to the bottom. The lonely silence was not interrupted by any

sound, save for a wandering bee buzzing its way about in search of a clover blossom or a wild flower.

It was not necessary for Weatherbee to inform Rosamond that they were standing before her sister's grave, but he drew his head up slowly, looked into her eyes and whispered softly, "Your sister is buried here."

Rosamond replied by a single nod of her head. She could find no words to express her thoughts and the two characters stood side by side staring down at the green, grassy mound.

Rosamond's mind darted back to the doll days, and memory seemed to gather all the childhood games she and her sister had ever played together and pile them in one heap at the foot of the grave; it gathered up the sad hours and scenes of her life and shuffled the sorrow with the happiness and spread it out before her, but the sorrow was so great that it covered and smothered the happiness. The childhood games, the simple dolls and their many little dresses only multiplied the agony and brought her to her knees sobbing like a child.

Memory had been hurrying Weatherbee's mind back and forth, and it bobbed from the little room where he first saw Jack and his mother up to the garret, and from the garret to the Kent mansion, and from the mansion to the grave where he stood trembling with sympathy and love for the girl who was weeping at his feet. His nervous fingers clenched the tiny bunch of sweet peas until they crushed the stems—his heart thumped and pounded against his breast and his tongue seemed paralyzed as he glared down and listened to the sobs of the girl he loved—each sob seemed to cut deep into his heart and leave a gash that would never heal. He begged his tongue to utter one word of sympathy, but it refused to obey. He drew his head high into the air—the peas fell from his hand—he crouched down at her side, seized her hand in both of his—"God, girl, don't cry—I can't stand it—I—I—can't stand it!" he moaned in a soft pleading tone.

His sympathy only augmented her sorrow and the tears rolled from her cheeks and fell onto the small bunch of lilies-of-the-valley that lay in her lap.

He watched each tear as it found its way from the soft brown eyes and anchored on the petal of the innocent flowers. Each tear seemed to trickle and burn its way through his heart before it reached the flowers' tiny leaves and the intense pain frightened him. He called on his better judgment to explain his agony and when it did, he realized for the first time how deeply he loved the girl whose hand he held clenched in his. He released his grip, unwound his fingers gently, placed her hand on the flowers in her lap and sat silently, his elbows on his knees and his chin resting in both hands.

Nothing heals the wound of a woman's heart as quickly as her own tears, and Rosamond wept and sobbed until the tears ceased and the sobs reduced themselves to a quick double breath that jerked and twitched as if her heart were fluttering with relief.

They sat silently at the foot of the grave—each one thinking of the other—each wondering what the other was thinking, and both forming the wrong opinion of the other's thoughts.

Rosamond raked her mind over and over in search of words that would plainly express her respect, gratitude and love. From the first time she had learned of Weatherbee's kindness to her sister, she had studied the situation carefully—and her respect was based on nobility—her gratitude on charity—and her love on both and a something else which no one living can describe. She found many words and weighed them carefully—she formed them into sentences and whispered them over and over to herself and studied their meaning, then selected the only one that she knew would truthfully and plainly explain her feeling. She drew her head up slowly, gazed at Weatherbee for several seconds and spoke in a firm voice: "John Weatherbee—I—love—you!" Each word was uttered slowly and distinctly.

Weatherbee jerked his chin from his hands—his eyes met hers and stared into them blankly, his elbows remained on his knees, his fingers straightened, the blood raced through his veins and he sat as if paralyzed.

"I know," she continued in the same tone when she saw the wild expression of surprise

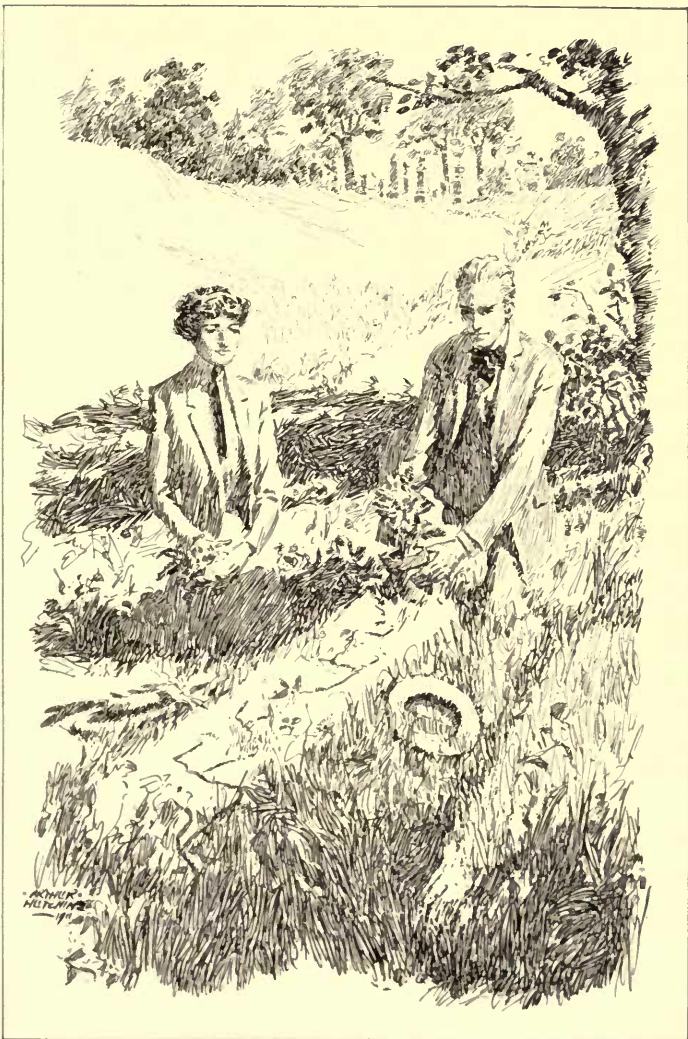
creep into his face, "that it sounds—rude—or perhaps silly—or sentimental—but I do—I love you. I don't care what you think of me for telling you—but I can't help it—I do—and I am proud of it."

She looked into his eyes steadily until his lids slowly covered them. She watched him remove his hat and place it on the ground at his side and run his trembling fingers through his hair. He rose to his feet and struggled to keep from staggering, for his mind was spinning like a top. He pushed his shaking hands into his pockets and glanced about as if in search of his bearings—his heart pounded away as if it were hammering at his tongue trying to force it to tell of its happiness, but he clinched his teeth, sealed his lips that were smiling feebly, and dreamed silently. Dreamed of himself, of the tiny thing—the helpless thing he considered himself, of his lonely home in the attic, of his future prospects—he dreamed through the dream again and again, shook his head and whispered to himself, "She doesn't realize what she has said." He reached for the bunch of sweet peas lying at his feet, took the

lilies-of-the-valley from Rosamond's lap, stretched his hand forward to assist her from her sitting position and whispered with a smile, "Let's arrange these now—shall we? You hold the flowers and I'll get some water."

Rosamond made no reply, but accepted the flowers and her eyes followed the tall figure as it strolled away through the dry grass with the small earthen jar hanging from its fingers. His silence baffled her and the faint smile that she discovered in the corner of his mouth when he helped her to her feet puzzled her and she repeated to herself again the words she had said to him. "I am proud of it," she whispered and her eyes wandered from Weatherbee to the lonely grave. "Where would she be were it not for him? I wonder if she knows we are here—I wonder if she heard me tell him."

Weatherbee hurried his feet through the grass, though his mind was working slowly and her words were ringing in his ears like Christmas bells. They were not words uttered by a silly child or a foolish girl yet in her teens, they were words from a woman's heart, a heart he considered more courageous than his own,



"So he placed the jar of cool water at the head of the grave. They both knelt on either side and she mingled the sweet peas with the lilies of the valley"

though it was sympathy and respect that forced his silence on the subject of love; his love was too sacred and his position in life too humble to allow him to mention it—it would mean nothing to her, he thought, so he placed the jar of cool water at the head of the grave, they both knelt on either side and she mingled the sweet peas with the lilies-of-the-valley. He sunk the jar into the earth to prevent it from falling. Their eyes met again—each eye seemed to search the other for a word—each face held a different expression, but both hearts were beating out the same message of love to the other.

“Do you think me rude?” Rosamond asked in a soft but firm voice.

“No,” Weatherbee answered in the same key as he shook his head slowly.

“Do you think me foolish, then?”

The shaking of his head continued and the same reply was made, but in a more sympathetic key, a tone that might be described as a heart-tone. It was heavier and firmer than a whisper, though softer and sweeter than his natural voice.

"Then what do you think—won't you tell me?"

"Do you realize what you said to me?"

"Every word!"

"Do you realize the meaning of those words?"

"I realize what they mean to me."

"Do you think they could mean any more to me than they do to you?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"I am positive."

"And you would really like to know what I think?"

"Yes."

He peeked between the swollen lids and studied the tender expression of seriousness in her eyes. The sun hurried its way along from beneath a blue cloud as if it were anxious to brighten those eyes, and a friendly bee buzzed itself down among the leaves of the sweet peas and hummed as if it were lending its music to the words that Rosamond's anxious ears were waiting for.

"Then I shall tell you what I think, for I feel

sure you do realize what you have said, and I am positive that I realize what I am going to say. As much as you love me—I love you that much—and that much more. Do you believe me?”

“I do.”

He reached across the flowers and took her hand in his and held it tightly.

“But there it must end.”

“No,” she whispered, “there it must begin, for when two people really love, there is no ending—it is always beginning. Each day ends and is bound with a binding of sweet memories, and each day begins anew and nothing else matters.”

“But ours would be bound with a binding of poverty and struggles.”

“Love knows no poverty, it knows no struggles. There is no poverty nor struggle for love that has love for a companion.”

The sun backed its way down behind the tree-tops on a western hill and the bee circled above their heads and sung itself away in the distance. Weatherbee clung to her hand; they rose, and sauntered up the steep hill hand

in hand; no words were spoken until they reached its top, then Weatherbee paused, looked down into her eyes and whispered, "Nothing else matters?"

"Nothing!"

gkt

1.25 net

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 042 169 3

